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"THE AUSTRALIAN POCKET LIBRARY"

On April 21, 1944, the following announcement appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald*:

AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

Cheap Copies Planned

Canberra, Thursday.—The committee of the Commonwealth Literary Fund proposes to make arrangements with publishers for the production of 25* Australian books in cheap editions of 25,000 each.

In announcing this, the committee said that the proposal to produce these 625,000 books was envisaged only as the commencement of a larger plan.

In completing details of this plan, the committee would keep in mind the necessity for reprinting the Australian standard books now out of print; the reading needs of members of the Australian forces, including prisoners of war; the provision of suitable Australian books for members of the Allied forces in Australia; and the increasing demand on the part of the general public for standard Australian works at reasonable prices, it was stated.

The 25 books it is proposed to reprint first are to sell at the following approximate prices: 128 pages, 1/3; 192 pages, 1/6; 256 pages, 1/9; 288 pages, 2/-.

The series will be known as the Australian Pocket Library, and a uniform format will be adopted by all publishers engaged in the work.

The list of the titles recommended by the Advisory Board of the Fund for inclusion in the library is:

Novels: "Haxby's Circus", K. S. Prichard (Cape, 1930); "Flesh in Armour", Leonard Mann (Phaedrus Periodicals Pty. Ltd., 1932); "Robbery Under Arms", Boldrewood (Macmillan, 1889); "Landtakers", Brian Penton (Sydney, Endeavour Press, 1934); "Man Shy", F. D. Davison (Sydney, Australian Authors' Publishing Co., 1931); "The Passage", Vance Palmer (S. Paul, 1930); "Tiburon", Kylie Tennant (Sydney, Bulletin Co., 1935); "We of the Never Never", Mrs. Aeneas Gunn (Hutchinson, 1908); "The Glass House", Barnard Eldershaw (Harrap, 1936); "Old Blastus of Bandicoot", Miles Franklin (Palmer, 1931).

Short stories: "On the Track" and "Over the Sliprails", Henry Lawson (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1900); "It's Harder for Girls", Gavin Casey (Angus and Robertson).

Descriptive writings: "On the Wool Track", C. E. W. Bean (Rivers, 1910); "Dig", Frank Clune (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1937); "Buffaloes", Carl Warburton (Sydney, Condor, 1934); "Confessions of a Beachcomber", E. J. Banfield (Unwin, 1908); "Red Centre", "Man and Beast", "In the Heart of Australia", H. H. Finlayson (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1935); "Call to the Winds", P. G. Taylor (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1939).

Historical: "Voyage of the Endeavour", G. A. Wood (Melbourne, McMillan and Co., 1926); "Australia", W. K. Hancock (London, Benn, 1930).

Poetry: "Winnowed Verse", Henry Lawson (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1924); "Collected Verse", A. B. Paterson (Angus and Robertson, 1921); "The Sentimental Bloke", C. J. Dennis (Angus and Robertson, 1915).

Scientific: "Insect Wonders of Australia", McKeown (Angus and Robertson, 1935).

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* There are 28.—EDITOR.

Belles lettres: "Selected Essays", Walter Murdoch (Angus and Robertson, 1941).

The Advisory Board hopes to add to this list, and proposes to arrange for the preparation of suitable anthologies of Australian poetry for inclusion later in the series.

A brief preparatory statement by Mr. H. S. Temby, Secretary of the Commonwealth Literary Fund, indicating that certain copyright and other obstacles had affected the choice of books, had been made in *The Herald,* and on April 29 the same newspaper published a contributed comment. In view of the importance of the matter, the Editor and Advisory Committee of *Southerly* then decided to allot some space in a number of the magazine to a consideration of the plan and of the books chosen. Some delay has occurred and it has not been possible to make the examination complete. As the largest, most interesting, and most vulnerable, the novel section has been fixed on for comment, and a note on each book is printed in the pages following. The writers of these notes are all disinterested critics, who approve of the plan though they do not all approve of the manner in which it has been put into operation, and they give their estimates and opinions without personal feeling towards the authors concerned. The vital matter, for them, is the upholding of a standard in Australian fiction, and accordingly it will be found that only four of the ten novels chosen are accepted, while four are rejected and two others considered at least doubtful. Here these contributors, working in complete independence of each other, set their judgments against that of the members of the Advisory Board of the Commonwealth Literary Fund, who include some men and women eminent in letters. It is open to these, however, individually or as a body, to affirm their choice and state their particular reasons for it. In one or two instances it would seem that defence is needed, even if it be only in the form that, as it was desirable that a certain author should be represented in the series, the only available work of that author was included. Such an argument, however, would scarcely hold for as many as four of the ten novels in the list; if copyright difficulties prevent the inclusion of other books, then the Pocket Library must wait till these difficulties are solved. There are other authors equally worth representing. Indeed, some important omissions from the list have already been noted—omissions which cannot altogether be accounted for in the same way. All in all, there seems to be a feeling that the Advisory Board has not made an entirely good start, and that, in future selections, it will be well advised to consider all the possibilities and all the circumstances. The Fund has a great trust and a high duty to the public,

and should therefore give its approval to nothing but the best. While all admiration must be granted for the enterprise shown and for the scope of the plan; while gratitude should be expressed for the making available, in a handy and cheap form, of works out of print or otherwise difficult to obtain; yet a hope may be voiced that the next list will give evidence of wider examination of the field, closer study of the material tentatively chosen and more consistency in the final choice.

At least eight volumes—three novels, one book of short stories, one descriptive work, two historical studies, and one book of poems—have now been issued.

Obvious candidates for admission are:

Marcus Clarke, *For the Term of his Natural Life.*
"Tom Collins", *Such is Life.*
"Henry Handel Richardson", *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony.*

Other suggestions that have been made include:

"Tom Collins", *Rigby's Romance.*
Katharine Susannah Prichard, *Coonardoo.*
M. Barnard Eldershaw, *A House is Built.*
Louis Stone, *Jonah.*
Wiliam Gosse Hay, *The Escape of Sir William Heans.*
Eleanor Dark, *The Timeless Land.*
Ernestine Hill, *My Love Must Wait.*
J. J. Hardie, *Pastoral Symphony.*
Christina Stead, *The Man Who Loved Children.*
Norman Lindsay, *"Saturdee."*
Kenneth (Seaforth) MacKenzie, *The Young Desire It.*
Leonard Mann, *The Go-Getter.*
Leslie Meller, *Leaf of Laurel.*

The absence of provision for drama has been complained of. It is to be wished that this omission may be remedied. A volume of selected longer plays and another of shorter plays might meet the need.

Haxby's Circus, by Katharine Susannah Prichard.

The Commonwealth Literary Fund is to be complimented on its attempt to popularise Australian writing by making available in cheap editions the best work of our writers. But it is impossible to understand the selection of some of the titles. Surely an attempt to popularise our own writing warrants some window dressing: the selection of the *best* work of each writer!

Katharine Susannah Prichard is to be represented in the Australian Pocket Library by *Haxby's Circus.* Not only is this book one of the worst of her novels, but it appeared in the Florin Library thirteen years ago. So, while better novels (such as *Coonardoo* and *Working Bullocks*) are being sold at top prices, paper and the time of printers are being wasted on a work which has been sold for thirteen years in cheap editions. No doubt it is an easier and a cheaper proposition to get from the publisher permission to reprint books for which he no longer cares twopence; but the people's money invested in the Commonwealth Literary Fund should be put to better use. The Australian public must be offered the best that our authors have written; cost should be a secondary consideration.

Of course the committee of the Commonwealth Literary Fund may intend to issue further works by Miss Prichard; but if their work is not speeded up, years may elapse before the original list is covered. Miss Prichard, then, must endure the doubtful publicity of a novel which, no doubt, she heartily wishes to forget, coming back out of the past to haunt her.

Haxby's Circus is a badly written "documentary" description of circus life. One feels a strong note of authenticity in Miss Prichard's description of that life stripped of all its glamour. She vividly portrays the hard, hand-to-mouth existence of circus people and the ill-luck that dogs a band of third-rate circus performers fighting a losing battle against modern forms of entertainment. One can follow their fortunes with sympathetic interest as long as they are going about their ordinary lives as circus hands. One can sense the effects of the hard work, the long journeys and the lack of sleep. One is prepared for the slip that sent Gina crashing to earth with a broken back. But, oh! Miss Prichard! have you not read the gospel according to St. John (ambulance)? You allowed your young farmer to lift a girl with a broken back and drive her for hours over rough country roads to a doctor. Circus life has toughened Gina, for she recovers in hospital. But hold! hard work has a disastrous effect on the weak back; Gina slouches into the posture of a hunchback!

The young farmer seems to serve no other purpose than that of providing the means for the wild ride. After his nerve-racking drive, in which Love carried him over the ruts as though the car were floating on still air, he sees the plaster-encased body of Gina. This is too much. He rushes out of the hospital (and the book) to reappear in pointless fashion years later for a fleeting visit to the circus. The only apparent reason for his presence in the story is to add a few more pages to its length. Having got the farmer into the book Miss Prichard was unable to do anything with him. If he had really loved Gina he would have wooed her while he had her at a disadvantage (in bed with a broken back she could hardly have avoided him!) and won her. But what would have happened to the story?

Gina eventually breaks with the circus and takes her mother away into hiding for six years. Love now comes to her but the pages are still too few for the publisher. Dan Haxby discovers them and Gina returns to the circus with her mother and baby sister. She returns at the very time when the urge to stay away should have been strongest. Miss Prichard, I am sure, intended us to feel the irresistible lure of the circus, stronger than love, calling like the call to migrant birds; but she succeeds only in convincing us that Gina returned to the circus to oblige Mrs. Bergen, who did not want her son, Mart, to marry Gina.

This method of killing off awkward characters may be necessary in radio or newspaper serials when the author, one instalment ahead of the public, cannot return and erase from the mind of every reader or listener what has gone before. Instead he gets rid of the characters in the quickest, quietest and cleanest manner possible. In a novel this is unpardonable, and careful revision is necessary to avoid such jarring elements.

Hasty writing and lack of critical revision caused Miss Prichard to miss the opportunity of writing a fine novel. She has all the elements of a grand story. She possesses the ability to portray vividly how those mysterious figures of the circus become ordinary people when they leave the ring. But, as soon as our interest is again roused and we find ourselves linked with the circus people in their hopeless struggle with outdated transport, the atmosphere is disturbed by the spirit of the Fairy God-Lover. Billy Rocca, ex-dwarf of the circus, made a fortune in Hollywood and, dying, left it to Gina. Haxby's is rejuvenated by the transfusion of crisp banknotes and becomes a super Wirth's circus, while Gina at last finds her own fulfilment as a super-Chaplin of the sawdust ring.

E. S. Lowery.

Tiburon, by Kylie Tennant.

It is perhaps irrelevant to ask why the Advisory Board of the Commonwealth Literary Fund should have included Kylie Tennant in its list of authors in preference to such novelists as Henry Handel Richardson and Christina Stead; but it is legitimate to ask why *Tiburon* should have been chosen to represent Miss Tennant's work. *The Battlers* is in every respect a better novel, and there is a maturer technique, as well as a more comprehensive view of life, in *Ride On Stranger.* Returning to *Tiburon* after reading these later books one realizes that the characteristic faults of sprawling construction, careless writing, and exaggerated characterization, which seem plain enough in them, are still more glaring in the first novel. I suspect that Miss Tennant would agree with Bernard Shaw's pronouncement: " 'for art's sake' alone I would not face the toil of writing a single sentence", so it will not do to insist too much on the inelegancies scattered through her work; but I must protest in passing that Shaw would never offer his readers such English as: "pretending to dig Jacky in the stomach, to that baby's great delight", "because of the manner she had been almost ignored by the dramatic society", "he became very anti-strikers", "the hall was built thirty years previous", to quote a few examples at random. Her dialogue, also, is such a faithful transcription of every-day talk that at times it falls uncomfortably flat.

These, however, are trivial blemishes. The basic reason why *Tiburon* is an unsatisfying novel is the lack of unity which in varying degree mars all Miss Tennant's work. She passes from episode to episode, from character to character, as she sees opportunity for a lively scene; the novel has no inner logic. Miss Tennant would no doubt justify her method by pointing out that it is a novel about a country town, Tiburon, not about Jessica, or the Whites, or any other individual or family. But you can't impose unity on a work merely by giving it a comprehensive title; and many of the episodes in *Tiburon* simply don't cohere. What possible excuse is there for the long facetious description of Jingo's play, which has no significance in the plot at all? And there is not much more justification for the details about Bill's fight, or the American battler episode and Emma's wedding. A novelist can choose a wide subject and yet shape his material into a significant pattern; but Miss Tennant has not learned the secret of this art. Moreover, though some of these episodes are amusing in themselves, in the last seventy pages or so the novel loses momentum and drags its way wearily to a close. The author allows all her main characters a farewell appearance, with the result that her story takes an unconscionably long time a-dying.

I have accused Miss Tennant also of exaggerating her characters. This is not true in all cases, nor is it always a fault. One of her chief qualities, indeed, is her shrewd and lively observation of human behaviour, and, although her humour has the subtlety of a porpoise, her satirical comments are often amusing: I recall Mrs. Mulver's children, who "were always far ahead of ordinary children. Even when Mrs. Mulver's Norman was sent to the reformatory, it was for being much wilder than most other boys who went there", and Mrs. Claufield ("The lace about her throat always gave her the look of an aristocrat faced with something unfortunate and smelly"). But it is in the presentation of Mrs. Claufield and the other "ladies" that Miss Tennant's method of exaggeration over-reaches itself. Even the unpleasant Mrs. Mulver is, one feels, enjoyed by her creator, and if she caricatures her it is for the fun of the thing. But Miss Tennant, though she can enjoy a wide variety of types, cannot extend her tolerance to idle, well-to-do women like Mrs. Claufield; and she exaggerates them, not with sympathetic humour, but with obvious venom. Mrs. Claufield is, unfortunately, a real enough type, but as presented by Miss Tennant she simply doesn't ring true. Nor does the cold, logical policeman, Scorby, who is also clearly disliked by his creator; she does allow him to state his case, but in a way that is even more inhuman than it is meant to be. Scorby was probably intended as a serious portrait, but he is a complete failure. Who could believe for a moment in his feeling for Jessica?

As a first novel *Tiburon* was nevertheless a notable performance, and in discussing its faults I have hinted at its virtues. The chief of these is its vitality—a vitality that is often crude but rarely feeble. It is this vitality that gives animation to many of the scenes and produces an interesting range of characters. Miss Tennant is happiest in her down-and-outs—the Whites, the Mulvers, Denny and his fellow-travellers; but the sympathetic rector, Bill Sorrell, is well drawn, even if only from the outside. Miss Tennant showed clearly in *Tiburon* that she had one of the indispensable qualities of a novelist, a keen response to life and people. But, if the novelist's material is life, it is the instruments of art which he must use to fashion it; and of these instruments Miss Tennant had, and still has, an imperfect control.

THELMA HERRING.

Flesh In Armour, by Leonard Mann.

The outstanding quality of *Flesh In Armour* is its Australianness. Remarks like that have acquired in the years a derogatory ring, as though we were not prepared, save in the way of lip-service, to allow a distinctive nationality to Australian books. The feeling that here is a genuine, persuasive, unexhibitionistic Australian tone is aided, of course, by the fact that the story concerns the varying fortunes of a particular platoon of the old A.I.F. in the battle-line, in French villages, in London and in constant intra-action—aided, too, by the vision of how the corporate spirit of the platoon hardened from camaraderie to proud determination and grimness in the famous 1918 offensive.

The battle passages and the descriptions of trench life naturally invite comparison with other war books—say, Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer.* One would expect a novel in the third person to be more expository in its account of the fighting than Sassoon's first person and reminiscent account; but one is hardly prepared for Mann's peculiar and effective method. He is meticulous, almost scholarly, in his outlining of campaigns, of tactics, even of the work of the platoon—at first you are a little dismayed by his precision—and then, in a setting of remote and unhuman detail, he carefully places some incident of strong emotion, of deeply personal soldiering, which shines with the greater vividness and, since it is so often an affair of colloquial monologue or dialogue, with the greater Australianness.

Throughout *Flesh In Armour* runs a love story, fittingly but not too ingeniously tangled. At the outset, this story, you say, is a common-place make-weight. Faded typist feeling fitful surges of war-time restlessness, sentimental towards Charl Bentley, acquisitive in regard to Frank Jeffreys, the two men being platoon mates but widely dissimilar in character. No touch of drab ordinariness in the presentation of the threefold relationship is spared. There is not even sordidness to give the novelist's normal emphasis. Once again Mann's deliberate purpose is contrast. The humdrum reality of it all is the foil for Frank Jeffreys' startling idealism and reverence; and not until almost the end of the book, when Charl, in an access of masculine friendliness, makes his fateful revelation to Frank, do we realise that the pattern of this love story is tied with complete artistry and rightness to these particular characters and these alone.

In short, *Flesh In Armour* is no streamlined panzer of a novel that overwhelms the mind in one burst. It is, however, something better, I fancy—a work in the main tradition of Australian fiction

that, in recollection, more and more coheres and is established in the imagination. It is not merely the central features that dwell in the memory either. A quarter of a century and a second world war may have made us and the outer world more quietly and temperately conscious of *our* Australianness, but any Australian will appreciate, with malice towards none, the true and typical humour of certain minor incidents of the book, such as the reluctant visit of the convalescent diggers to the Duchess of Stexe and how "Our Chetley correspondent" might have been presumed to report the proceedings.

Leonard Mann wrote this novel in pride and sympathy and good fellowship and so it lives warmly, is the essential flesh and blood of literature in not too much armour and glitter of mere technique.

O. N. Burgess.

Man Shy, by Frank Dalby Davison.

Frank Dalby Davison recently said that every author worth his salt wished for an opportunity to rewrite a book after ten years. Over ten years have gone by since *Man Shy* was first published, and after progressing through several editions it passes without change into the Australian Pocket Library. Some revision was needed, and evidently Mr. Davison has not found the opportunity. A story which was otherwise so well wrought should hardly have been perpetuated in thousands while at least one prominent defect remained in it. I refer to a lapse during the critical incident of the fight between the two bulls for possession of the red heifer. The duel is at its height and one expects a climax such as Hemingway so skilfully and excitingly presents in his studies of bull-fights, when "There was an epic quality in that battle. It had to be! It was an inevitable occurrence in the herd life", Davison interposes and drops one flat. "Epic!" The grand epithet minified by the strain to impress, through decade after decade, of beggared journalists and film-publicity men! It is no use Mr. Davison's *saying* that the combat was epic: he has to *present* it as such, to give us the so-called "epic" in action. Instead of doing that, he tries to induce an effect by the use of a cheapened word, which is followed by clichés. Further, as I have indicated, the narrator intrudes here in the role of commentator, and the naturalness and self-sufficiency of the tale are thereby impaired.

One suspects from this anti-climax the presence of a radical hesitancy in Davison: that he feels unequal to the great moment, unable to face it, and therefore takes refuge in banality. The same fault may be noticed in his shorter story, "The Road to Yesterday", published in *The Bulletin* last Christmas. It is a piece of work remarkable for the close knowledge of farming conditions and practice that it shows, and one follows all the details with the intense interest that could *not* be given to a mere agricultural manual. By means of a physical return to the place, and a mental return to the time, Davison relates how Arthur Sims cleared, cultivated and made fruitful a tract of bush-land: man mastering matter. But in course of time the old man retired to the city and died, his family dispersed, the farm was abandoned, and when the narrator saw it again, "little by little the bush was reclaiming its own". "The bush was reclaiming its own"! At that jejune phrase the whole story collapses, and the visitor is left to find his way back to town unattended by the reader's interest. If all the minute description, all the detailed narration, were to lead merely to such a climax, so poorly expressed, then, one wonders, was the story worth telling at all? It is true that it all means something to the traveller, but if to him the great moment presented itself only as "the bush reclaiming its own" then he was not personally interesting enough to bother about.

On the other hand, Davison's story "The Good Herdsman" in *Coast to Coast, 1943* is possibly as near perfection, even at the crisis, as this writer's work could approach. That is because the crisis is a mental one, and Davison does seem to be more at home with states of mind. Old Isaac makes his decision naturally and quietly, but it is momentous nevertheless, and once made, it allows the narrative to subside gently to the end—"calm of mind, all passion spent".

Man Shy has deservedly won praise as an animal story and as an exemplification of the love of freedom that moves beast as well as man. Perhaps it has been overpraised. Stories of this kind, which are the result of observation, treated with sympathy, written without affectation, are too rare in Australian literature. But it is not perfect, and some day, one hopes, the author will find time to reconsider some of its passages and also to attend to a few crudities of presentation (for further example, "to get back to the red calf", on page 25) and certain flaws of style. The example of George Moore might be studied with advantage.

R. G. Howarth.

We of the Never Never, by Mrs. Aeneas Gunn.*

It may seem an impertinence for one who knows nothing of the Northern Territory, and whose memory does not go back to 1902, to write of *We of the Never Never*; yet it is not really so, for to me *We of the Never Never* comes as a book purely, with no haze of sentimental association, and, after all, that is how literature, whether of the bush or the city, must finally be judged. *We of the Never Never* is now roughly forty years old—the awkward age for a book, when it enjoys the advantages of neither antiquity nor modernity. Furthermore, it belongs to a class of books—reminiscences of life in strange places—which age very quickly indeed. How many books of the same type and the same period are readable today? It is hard to think of anything between *The Story of an African Farm* and things like *Up the Zambesi in a Governess Cart.*

Mrs. Gunn's book is, of course, a lightweight compared with Olive Schreiner's; but it remains a readable, enjoyable, true and happy book. It does not date, essentially. When one has discounted an occasional archness (especially in the use of Capital Letters) and a certain romantic lushness (under correction, I find it hard to accept "forest glades" or "ferny nooks" as apt to the Elsey country), both of which belong to the period rather than to the woman, one can sit back and enjoy, without need for apology or embarrassment as between author and reader. Mrs. Gunn is essentially a comic writer; her book is rich in scenes of natural, unforced comedy, humanly true and organically relevant. Tam at the Katherine, slinking from corner to bar and back again; Dan's headwagging wisdom—"I've been forty years outback, and I've known eight or ten women in that time, so I ought to know something about it"; the man from "Beyanst" and his cabbage; Cheon wherever he appears, and especially in the Dickensian climax of the Christmas dinner: the book is full of passages of this happy kind. The style, too, is appropriate to the content, for, being both lively and lighthanded, it is as natural and unforced as the people themselves. The book, in fact, does not date just because it is so genuinely alive and natural.

We of the Never Never is good comedy because there is more to it than the merely comic. Like all true comedy, it has a point of view to put about human life and human values, and it puts it as naturally and honestly as it presents its humorous scenes. The idiom of its

* The list printed on the back cover of each of the books that have already appeared in the series gives Mrs. Gunn's *Little Black Princess.* It is to be hoped that this is an error. *The Little Black Princess* will hardly suit adult readers.—EDITOR.

morality may have become blurred by the passage of time; but it would be shallow criticism which, confusing husk with grain, would call its bush code (as I have heard it called) sentimental or trite. The important fact is that the code is germane to the people of the book, and to the book as a book; it is therefore artistically right. With its ethical truth or falsity I am not here concerned; but it is safe to say that others besides the people of the bush will agree that "townsfolk are apt to forget the beginnings of things". It is the virtue of *We of the Never Never* that it remembers them without affectation or self-consciousness. S. MUSGROVE.

Old Blastus of Bandicoot, by Miles Franklin.

It is hard to see why the Committee of the Commonwealth Literary Fund should have chosen this book for inclusion in the Australian Pocket Library. In spite of a certain vitality, it is an amateurish piece of work; the story is weak and sentimental, the characters verge on parody of the types they represent, and it is written in an extraordinary home-made dialect which is a mixture of the slang and the old-fashioned journalese of fifty years ago. The story is Romeo and Juliet in bowyangs, set in the Australian countryside of what is now the Australian Capital Territory "in those days so lately fled when horseless carriages were a curiosity", a Romeo and Juliet in which Old Capulet has become the central character and in which the tragedy is turned to wedding bells and farce by the intervention of a bushfire and a comic Englishman as the Governor. Old Blastus, William Barry of Bandicoot Hill Station near Queanbeyan, has quarrelled with his next neighbours, the Lindseys, because his elder daughter has been seduced by one of the Lindsey sons and has had an illegitimate child. Now his younger daughter has grown up and is being courted by one of the younger Lindsey boys. Old Blastus makes a lot of fuss about this, but just as he is about to horsewhip his daughter for going surreptitiously to a woolshed ball at the Lindsey's he has to help save the Lindsey homestead from a bushfire, and his kindly neighbours, by presenting him with a motor-car and by engineering a visit from the Governor, complete the reconciliation of the two families.

The book has some merit. Miles Franklin knows the people, the life, the scene, she describes. In the course of the book the whole atmosphere of the pastoral life of this part of Australia is really presented, the pioneer homestead and the work of the farm, the look and feel of the country, the rhythm of seasonal work, the social life

of country entertainments and amusements. But it remains a surface picture and the people remain picturesque photographs of a community seen in the comic dress and manners of a picturesque revival. The musical-comedy story never penetrates to the level at which the reader can feel *with* them and understand them. He merely looks *at* them. The writer is unable to use the story as an instrument to probe and reveal the anatomy of character and the functioning of community life. On the contrary, the characters exist merely to guarantee the action. It is writing of the sort that one finds in a detective story. We know as much about Old Blastus, Dora, Mabel and Ross Lindsey at the beginning as we do at the end of the book. They are no more than machinery that makes the story function. The result is that none of these people really comes alive. Dora is simply any spirited adolescent girl rebelling against the dullness of home rule. Ross is simply a well-dressed young man, an illustration from the *Stock and Station Journal* of a riding event at a country show. Old Blastus is simply a roaring domestic tyrant with pioneer trimmings. The writer carefully explains how their emotions work. She is unable to make us feel anything of their passionate life.

The story might still remain a slight comedy in the burlesque manner of Steele Rudd if it were not for the almost unreadable lingo in which it is written. It mixes the dreadful artlessness and the no less dreadful artfulness of the tyro. It is apparently meant to be comic. Here is a sample describing the ball at Chesham Park:

"It was not exclusively a gathering of the seignorage, but there was a sprinkling, which together with the Queanbeyan professional clique and some of the medium old pioneerage and dunniewassals were sufficient to make the hoi-polloi feel they were seeing high society . . . Mrs. Blackett the Federal Member's wife was present and generated whisperings as being excitingly 'townie' because she had ventured on the right degree of evening dress for the occasion, to wit a work of black lace with elbow sleeves and white kid gloves, and a transparent net yoke through which the contours of her motherly but nulliparous bosom could be discerned by intrepid investigators."

"Generated whisperings" forsooth! The wonder is that any sense of the natural idiom and atmosphere of country life should ever emerge from such language. Whenever the writer is on the verge of any revelation of real emotion, any stroke of delicate insight, this clumping verbiage knocks it down and kicks it to death.

It is not only odd that the Committee should have chosen to reprint the book in the Pocket Library; it is also odd that it should ever have been printed at all. A. D. Hope.

Landtakers, by Brian Penton.

Landtakers belongs to a fairly large group of Australian novels based upon the early history of the colony. Different periods of that history are traced through the lives, developments and fortunes of people historical and fictitious. In their general method these novels look back to *Richard Mahony* and *The Forsyte Saga.*

A House is Built, All That Swagger, The Timeless Land come to mind in association with *Landtakers.* All have a similarity in theme and purpose, but each has its own particular problem and method. Whether *Landtakers* is the best of the group or whether it has special qualities as a novel that earn it inclusion in the Australian Pocket Library is open to doubt. But there can be no question that *Landtakers* is an interesting and honest attempt to develop a rather difficult theme. The theme is stated by Mr. Penton in rather journalistic language: "Growing up in a period when Australians had begun to feel in themselves the germ of a new people and to fumble for words to express themselves, I often wondered what roots that new psyche was coming from. Then it struck me that the answer was somewhere in the life of this old man and his generation. If I could piece together the picture of that epoch as I had inherited it from him—the savage deeds, the crude life, the hatred between men and men and men and country, the homesickness, the loneliness, the despair of inescapable exile in the bush; the strange forms of madness and cruelty; the brooding, inturned characters; and, joined with this, an almost fanatic idealism which repudiated the past and the tyranny of the past and looked to the future in a new country for a new heaven and earth, a new justice; on the one hand to social outcasts, men broken by degradation and suffering, on the other the adventurers: blackest pessimism balancing the most radiant optimism—if I could only *see* all this, then I would understand" (p. 29).

The common failing of this chronicle type of novel is that the events and not the characters of the actors determine the action. Mr. Penton has avoided this. His main concern is with the motives and character of his hero Derek Cabell, the change in his personality from the son of an English gentleman, revolted by the brutal life of the colony, dreaming of a return to England, to the man of property, hardened, perhaps, to an extent brutalised by his experiences, renouncing the opportunity to return to England when it came. The latter part of the book is concerned with the conflicting purposes and desires of four people—Cabell, his wife, Gursey and McGovern.

Mr. Penton does not simplify motives or favour easy solutions of problems of character. He pictures his hero looking back on his actions and still unable quite to explain them, except through the compulsion of circumstances. The motives for his actions at critical points are not unmixed, and neither are the reasons behind his decisions. He left England not to escape punishment or disgrace, not because an adventurous spirit urged him to try life in a new country, but simply because it had been arranged by the family that he, the youngest son, should go there. He went because he would not risk the charge of weakness that a refusal might involve. At first he has no particular aim in the new country, despising and despised by the convicts and ex-convicts among whom he lives. But when an opportunity appears he has a fierce ambition to make money and return, a success, to England and his family. He has no idea of making a life for himself in Australia. His motives are, according to the convict Gursey, thoroughly discreditable, to pick the eyes out of and then leave a country which Gursey holds, pathetically enough, to belong to his kind, the outcasts who cannot and do not wish to return. After suffering acute hardships in a place where nature herself seems unfamiliar and unfriendly, he begins to feel bound to Australia by ties of property and self-interest, but not by any liking for the country. The desire to return to England remains strong, but he is forced to postpone it, through accident not desire—an impending lawsuit in which he is doubtful of success, the wreck of his marriage, and his tangled personal relationships with McGovern and Gursey. When finally the opportunity comes he renounces it, not because he likes Australia or feels unworthy of his family (one brother a bishop, another ranking high in the army). The satisfaction of showing them he had been successful seems unimportant. What satisfaction could there be in the approbation of those who had led tame and conventional lives? What would their probable disapproval of his roughness mean? As he writes to his sister: "I know you pity me. You have no right. How can you know what goes on?" The attractions of return have vanished. He is not a happy man. He has suffered much. But he has a satisfaction in achievement which may grow into happiness. There is a suggestion that he realises now that his wife was the only fitting mate for him during those years of his life. And some tie binds him to his property, the land he has tamed. He said in his last letter to his sister: "A man might want to go back where he had been happy, but it would stop at that. Where he's had his hard times—that is where he stays." There the author leaves him.

Mr. Penton has tried to be truthful in his portrayal of Cabell, and has faced the intricacies of human character. There is, at the end, a change in Cabell's character and in his attitude to Australia. But it is not, in the romantic manner, a character ennobled and strengthened by struggle and difficulty. It is a character toughened, but in part brutalised and embittered. His attitude to the country is not one of affection and bright hopefulness, but just some vague attraction which made possible his renunciation of the return to England.

Much of the book is written in a rather violent journalistic style. There are stock humorous characters and the brutality is often lividly described. Of course the brutality is an essential ingredient in any imaginative reconstruction of life in Australia at this period, but Mr. Penton, one feels, often lays the colours on too thickly. The fight to the death between two blinded men in a burning room is overpowering in its horror and brutality.

But the book is written with consistent zest and energy, if not always with the highest literary skill. One leaves it feeling that the story is an honest attempt at a truthful portrayal of a man's character as shaped by exacting experiences and violent happenings. As Mr. Penton pictures his hero looking back and wondering, for example, how, with his birth and code of behaviour, he could bring himself to plan and lead the massacre of a tribe of blacks, so he leaves us trying to disentangle the motives in Cabell's treatment of Gursey.

A. G. Mitchell.

The Passage, by Vance Palmer.

Not all the novels chosen for the Commonwealth Literary Fund reprints have met with the approval even of admirers of the authors represented; and there will be many who will claim that *The Passage* is not a wise choice from the novels of Vance Palmer.

Such critics may be right. Yet if the intention is to select the work that will most readily appeal to the average intelligent reader of fiction, then choice of *The Passage* may well be defended, for it will immediately catch the interest of many who might find no appeal in, for instance, *The Swayne Family*. For the most interesting thing about *The Passage* is its subject-matter; and Palmer's greatest success is probably in bringing out clearly the characteristic life of a settlement of professional fishermen on the Queensland coast—a subject that gives the novel, for the average Australian reader, a flying start.

On the other hand, *The Passage* probably does not show Palmer at his best. The emphasis seems to be misplaced, since the greater part of the story is devoted to Lew Callaway's relations with two women, Lena and Clem, neither of whom is drawn "in the round". There are, too, weak links in the chain of events: the very marriage of Lew and Lena takes place, as it were, off-stage and is never quite accepted by the reader; and there is a sense of strain in the incident of the lost child (an interesting comparison, this, with the more carefully developed incident in *Such is Life*). The reappearances of Lena's lover Craig must also be taken rather too much on trust.

Far more promising is the account of the relationships between Anna Callaway and her sons Hughie and Lew. Here, one feels, Palmer has something worth-while to say; but he does not give his full attention to saying it and the reader is disappointed at not being allowed to see further into the psychological problems involved. One feels that Palmer has more to offer on the subject of the mother-son relationship than on the father-son theme which he so often treats. (I should add, of course, that parts of the story of Lew and Peter are undeniably moving.)

In one other way the novel seems comparatively undeveloped. This is in the recording of the thoughts of, say, Lena and Lew; these are surely oversimplified—and the recording perhaps already outdated in technique. And one must comment on the over-frequent use of the exclamation-mark; it is indeed an odd way of conveying the character of the steady-going, stolid Lew to attribute to him thoughts that are so often exclamatory in form.

H. J. Oliver.

The Glasshouse, by M. Barnard Eldershaw.

The inclusion of *The Glasshouse* in the Australian Pocket Library list rather surprised many who had expected to find *A House is Built*. Since Miss Eldershaw, half of the combination, is a member of the selection committee there were no doubt strong personal reasons for the preference. *A House is Built* is an obvious choice because it deals with early Australian history and also it brought fame to the authors by sharing the *Bulletin* novel prize for 1928 with Katharine Susannah Prichard's *Coonardoo*. We are evidently asked, however, to consider *The Glasshouse* by itself, without comparison of *A House is Built*. What merits has it, then, to justify ranking it with other books as a representative piece of good Australian fiction?

There is no particular novelty of theme or setting. "The Glasshouse" is the crew's name for "the superstructure of glass and white-painted metal that housed the Captain and the passengers" on a Norwegian cargo ship, the "Therikion". Besides the Captain, twelve people, most of whom are bound for Australia, occupy the cabins. The "heroine" is a successful woman novelist, no longer young, named (in that pathetic longing after masculinity which has always characterised the woman novelist) Stirling Armstrong. According to herself, she alone is honest, sincere, not maliciously interested in other people. She is the creator—unobtrusive, almost negative. So, as the voyage progresses, she studies her fellow-passengers, "with an interest half scientific, half creative, fastidiously impersonal", weaves small personal histories for them—"Why shouldn't she shape something out of the little chaos about her?"—and altogether well fills in the time. For one of the complement, however, she has no story, and that is the Captain, a Norwegian, married, estranged from his wife, devoted to his ship. Between him and Stirling an intimacy springs up; he at last takes her in his arms. At Fremantle they part: his duty lies with the ship. Stirling, having found love, has also lost it. She lands, and leaves in sorrow.

So it was only, after all, the old tale of a spinster unwittingly in search of a man! Instead of developing into a drama of shipboard relations, observed and studied by the one detached and competent observer and student, the story tails off as a more or less conventional love-romance, involving the observer herself!

But there is more to be found than that. For one thing, *The Glasshouse* is evenly and smoothly written: it has the calm and undulation of the ocean itself. The inset stories may carry the air of exercises by a girl learning to write—they hardly seem of "successful novelist" standard—but the main narration runs straight forward and all signs of collaboration have been concealed. Occasionally (as in the joke on "the broad Flemish base" and the little girl's thought about the ship's foghorn) the more robust note of Miss Eldershaw may be detected, but everything else seems subdued to the quieter spirit of Miss Barnard. Thus, too, within their limits, the people of the novel seem to be fairly well discriminated—the rattle-brained pair, the fussy, retired schoolmarm, the sentimental mother, the sheltered girl, the consumptive boy, the maternal widow, the singer who has failed, and the rest. The authors know their main character herself well and are successful in conveying her feelings about her work.

And yet, is this novel, as issued by an English publisher, anything more than the average season's average? Is there anything particularly Australian in *The Glasshouse* to justify regarding it as a local product reaching a high level? One must regretfully answer no. To multiply it by 25,000 is to proclaim mediocrity our standard. The faults of *A House is Built* can be forgiven because of its theme and setting; but the faults of *The Glasshouse* can claim no extraneous indulgence. It must stand or fall as itself, and one is afraid that its lack of general interest will cause it to topple.

R. G. Howarth.

Robbery Under Arms, by "Rolf Boldrewood".

Perhaps no comment on this choice is needed. *Robbery Under Arms* belongs to our literary tradition, and is still readable enough to justify its inclusion among the more "popular" books in the series. Its presence, however, renders more noticeable the absence of that much more important and profounder early work, Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of his Natural Life.* In spite of its artificial prolongation, this book still ranks as great, and it is the best of our historical novels, unrivalled until the appearance of *The Escape of Sir William Heans* by William Gosse Hay, which is similar in matter but far different in treatment and tone. Even if *For the Term* occupied two volumes in the Australian Pocket Library, it is desirable that a generation with little or no access to the book should now have an opportunity of reading it.

R. G. Howarth.

HIGH MOMENT

Always and always the tide shall run again
when some high moment in the hour of love
brands with its ferment all our valuing
and star-high run the mountains of desire,
high, airy-white and fleecy as cloud hills
hold brolga-like corroboree in sky
whose blue is a cold mirror for sun's gold.

Always and always the year shall break again
in wattle-flaunting moment when sharp love
cuts like the magpie wing into the dawn
and sings with rich falling black-white notes
that flow and flow through slow-falling leaves
that flash dark shine as dawn-sun tops the hills
and gold light leaps and travels all the mist.

Always and always shall it come again
Like the rain's warriors marching on the plain,
sweetening the air and smearing vivid green
on the bare eaten patches of the ground,
or as that shining second before rain
when all stands eager-etched and pencil clear
—so comes that moment, always and again.

Always and always in the days between
the grey thrush sings his native loveliness
of quiet as the ticking moments slide,
eager and luminous, on and ever on
like the green river whispering in his bed.
So, between lightning flashes of high knowing,
the rain falls soft, and love is ever growing.

IAN MUDIE.

TO THE YOUNGER POETS

Goodbye, friends.
It is a far road and a high road to your feet now,
but I shall walk the foot-hills until life ends.

Poor is the house
I am lodged in (I'd not say I planned it
who planned none) and chance-built on a mild carouse

when sparks came
down the moon-ways (if I took them for great suns
it was only till daylight and day's cold flame),

but in the main
it contents me, the neighbours and I speak the same tongue,
the country's not drought-bitten nor sogged with rain.

Yet in my heart
the haunched beast would cry now, would howl down
the great heights, the great stars and you who depart

leaving me here
on a round hill, making and mumbling my poor rhymes,
were Truth not heart's master, so the song runs clear.

So, far and fair
be your journeying, the sharp peaks warm to your brave feet,
planets lean on your shoulders . . . and God be there.

PAUL L. GRANO.

DISCERNMENT

A shepherd watching on the wold
all of a fine May morning-o
beheld a Hunter by the wood
the whole wild wood adorning-o.
He set his hand beneath his hood
to find a horn as red as blood.

A hunter hunting by the wood
all of a fine May morning-o
beheld a Shepherd on the wold
the whole wide wold adorning-o.
He set his hand beneath his cap
to hear a pipe as sweet as sap.

A fisher fishing by the lake
all of a fine May morning-o
beheld a Fisher by his side
the whole wide wave adorning-o.
He set his hand to that Fisher's line
to feel a fish as dark as wine.

Three kings came riding through the east
all of a Christmas morning-o,
beheld a Maiden and a Crib
the byre and all adorning-o.
They peered within 'twixt Maid and byre
to greet a Star as white as fire.

PETER HOPEGOOD.

THE PROPERNAMER

By J. McGuire

Behind me, in the Marrickville tram, again after so many years I heard the same voice: Hallet's, old friendly Hallet, adult associate of my youth, now seeming not so old (on the principle of the constant increment to the increasing principle); he was back to back with me, his unmistakable voice betraying him to me, myself shielded by silence. I could catch his profile and an impression of the poise of his head as he leaned to his right in talking to some companions. At first I could not hear what he was saying: the voice itself raised for me memories of such important years, years ago, that the present became insignificant. It had not changed, his intonation and cast of speech; it was a special sort of English voice with a detail of its own; he once admitted he had been to the best school and the best university (as so many have) with unknown results academically, but one result, the voice, was patent and apparently perdurable; it had not varied in fourteen years; about him his companions' voices were arid, hard, nasal and slovenly, but back he came every time with mechanical precision, the faultlessly tailored vocal vestment. I had to admire the grain of a man whose voice stands by him so monumentally.

I was no longer in the tram, but back in Adelaide, walking out to Brougham Place to Old Friendly Peter Hallet's place to return him a book which I had at last given up trying to read, and perhaps to borrow another, and at that instant I happened to glance up at the spire of St. Peter's and found myself, as it were, sighting along it as taking a peep along the barrel of a fantastic piece of armament, drawing a bead on God, and I thought, yes, that is just what we are doing, we are sticking him up for alms, for weather, for crops and male offspring and health, and then I saw that I was finally looking at the tip of the lightning conductor and thought, ah! we haven't got it all our own way, this gun could blow back very nastily if it wanted to and burst its breech and everybody in it. Of course I remembered this special incident now because it was always part of Hallet and I could not help fusing it into my composite image of him although it was something of which he had no knowledge. But who could not fill a thousand pages with his own arbitrary associations in this way, and in fact what is a story but a list or schedule of such essentially unrelated items; truth is stranger than fiction, and the audience is larger the more arbitrary the juxtapositions of the story-teller. Thus the story which pleases you, at which you nod your head in delight, is just that much of a waste of time. There are no intrinsic corres-

pondences in the open world; the event which happens exactly as you had imagined it will be found to be a hoax; the woman of your life as she walks into it is not as you had pictured her at all, is blonde instead, has uncommonly large ears, in short is quite a shock to you. These shocks are surely what keep us alive. It would seem that the human animal despises what he knows and reveres what he does not know. Ice at the North Pole, where it ought to be, is simply no news at all, but ice-cream under fire in the Solomons is something to write home about or give an O.B.E. for, but after a while it gets stale there too and somebody else catches the limelight with sculpture in drain-pipes or poetry from chance words from chance pages, divination, or the Virgilian Augury. Well, what else are we all doing? Where does the minatory spire come into the person of Peter Hallet? If I had walked along another path it should never have come into the picture, but there is an ambush concealed behind the frivolous 'if', for what happened is recorded and fitted into a pattern, and anything that happens, any leaf that falls into Verlaine's beer, any gull that flies to sea for James Hanley to follow all of his life, any Appolonian straw in the wind is an augury as good as any other sign from heaven. But some men are more proud, will continue tossing until it shows their way, till they win outright or lose irrecoverably; they are the stuff of stern novels, men of character, landmarks in the maelstrom, but Hallet was never such a man, as a sportsman born he played the game and took dismissal without resentment. In those days we were all, all of us under the amateur tutelage of Hallet, always getting ideas of the 'spire' sort, rather heavy, heady and callow, most of which we were never to vindicate or demonstrate, merely to outgrow, and so to quit Hallet; we, each in turn, made of him a cocoon.

Then I was at Peter's place again and some other young people were there also and Peter was telling them all about lots of things, the habits of the Praying Mantis, the sort of food eaten by Indians in South America, the telepathic practices of the African natives, how Rousseau got along with Hume in England, and I remember how disappointed I was to hear him repeating a story which he had told me before. No, there was no change in the story, no prefabrication thereby exposed, just that it was the same one twice, and that was the beginning of my watching him.

That was also the beginning of estrangement, which was a sad process for me, but a necessary one, a discipline I told myself. One must keep moving; for me Peter was news and new books and to my eighteen years his forty seemed to contain a lead in knowledge that

I should never catch. But from then on I noticed and noticed more and more that he was marking time, had got lazy, and I knew therefore why all of his friends were young, perhaps also the reason he had never married, preferring the generation behind. What a housemaster! A different set of boys every year and no snoopers remaining to damn him for having said the same thing twice. But he had no need to work, apart from having money, a little but enough, he had a fastidious regard for his own timetable; it was not always he would talk and entertain, mostly always, but not always always. That remained with him until the end of my term under his influence and my respect for him in the end rested solely on that display of the autonomous, the solitary mood.

And then a sentence of his behind me in the tramcar: 'But how could you expect Stalin and Roosevelt to come to working terms on a proposition like that. I mean, it's constitutionally impossible. Johnson, this man who's just come back . . . well, he had dinner with Stalin, d'you see? . . .' I chuckled silently seeing here the same mind at work through the same immaculate voice and again I crossed a thousand miles (the way I came) and listened to him talking in the large sitting room, two rooms he had had knocked into one, the floor mottled with mobile shade from the Jacarandas playing with the sunlight outside the high french windows, and the past voice obscured while rhyming with the present: 'Moore once told me in London—I was with Arthur Benedict and Joan Jason, of Jason and Cox, that Jason . . .' and on that voice picked its elegant way but I let it go, for that was the time of my next discovery. It is the discoveries which we remember; there are hundreds of events since that instant which I have forgotten as surely as if I had never been there, things serious enough at the time, too, but this discovery was made in the instant after that meandering sentence. Peter lit a cigarette and we all waited, mostly students, and I noticed 'Peter Jackson' on the packet, then in a ramshackle torrent as though a poultergeist were pelting them at me I received impact after impact from furniture, clothing, bric-a-brac, appointments. I was lifted into a haze of ecstasy, the ecstasy of discovery, a peak in Darien; I, I alone had unravelled this complex secret; I was Avagadro finding periodicity in the continuum, predicting elements to be discovered; I did predict also, with intoxicating success. The Jamieson's whisky in the Tantalus was not in the decanter, was left in the bottle! Then the Harris tweed coat, the Donegal suit; flashing my eyes to the rack, his overcoat a Burberry, hat Borsalino, stick Malacca, a Gladstone bag on the floor beside the hallstand; he was sitting on a Davenport; his other chair in which I sat a Morris

chair, then Edgware, then Wedgwood, on the wall some Batik work, some Daguerrotypes, on the floor an Axminster, on the Jacobean table D'Oyleys; the two girls from the School of Arts (which in Adelaide means school of arts) were sitting on his Chesterfield; his curtains were Reckitt's blue, Payne's gray the skirting and Dado; outside in the ice-chest I remembered Cooper's and Bass, never West-End I remembered. I remembered the insistence on Gillette, never razor, his rifle Winchester, always Winchester, never just rifle. OH! But this is fantastic, my reverie continued, to label and libel a man just on the evidence of a few chance observations; everybody has such things about them inevitably; the instruments and appurtenances of civilisation are largely dubbed with the names of their inventors, there being no other name by the sheer nature of the facts. And I went on and noted the Van Heusen collar, Van Harding shirt, and Peter as he was then talking was expounding from an Atlas, and at that well-remembered instant he turned to me and said: 'Mitcham, just reach me that Baedeker there will you, on the bottom shelf next to the Webster', and that clinched it for me, was the rennet in the curd to make my cheese. Clearly for the first time I saw into the facet of the man which made him always use, at first jocosely, then almost officiously, instead of our surnames the names of our particular suburbs or districts; I lived at Mitcham, and that became my name; Burchell who lived at a place called by the offensive name 'Colonel Light Gardens' was always 'Light', but Willis, who lived at Prospect, was just 'Willis' and a little frown of perturbation. I got up and gave him the Baedeker. I had smugly liked the 'Mitcham' before, but now I saw it as part of a mania, the mania which is the beginning of character, without which prediction is so much harder.

So now in a tram in Marrickville this old stuff had meaning again as Peter's immaculate voice continued to take its part in the pitiful hopeless conversation of the tramcar strategists. When it was 'which side had the best planes?' there was Peter voicing 'Lancaster, Stirling, Beaufort . . .' For the new-fangled Spitfire I knew he would have no time, because it had no TIME for him, summoned no associates from the pages of Gardiner's history of England, no odour of the Wars of the Roses, no Hogarthian illustration sprang to his eye. 'Dreadnought' I then remembered he had said was a trade name, a brand for pocket-knives and braces, and so I could feel was his reaction to 'Spitfire, Hurricane', to the garbled mentions of which by his tramcar fellows he simply did not respond, returned to Halifaxes and Blenheims.

He would be quite an old man, now, I had to tell myself, still no excusable atavism this: just a preposterous idiosyncrasy; a man

who ought to know better simply wallowing in a child's conversation for the sake of using names. With strangely intense interest I listened for his retort to some talk about Flying Fortresses and Lightnings. I could almost feel him shudder with distaste and when he said: 'you can have all these mass-produced things; give me the Lancaster, the Stirling, the Short-Sunderlands' he nearly had me bursting into the conversation on his side on the lines: 'Airacobra, Lightning . . . rubbishy stuff, names for toys and boot polish and insecticides which don't work.' And as Peter continued with his resounding accurately articulated Names of Place and History I joined with him spiritually in fuming against the innumerable unmentionable obscenities created for trade-names for Boots, Business houses, Hardware, Cameras . . . Minicam meaning miniature camera, this is the sort of mushroom trash which feeds the ephemeral world of trade.

But I pulled myself out of this heroic mood and again was drawn, or the puerile conversation behind drove me, back into the Brougham Place sitting room, which was, anyway, a more pleasant place than the present smoking compartment . . . but why did smoking cross my mind at the instant of the fadeout? . . . The smell, the terribly familiar smell . . . Barney's . . . Barney's tobacco in Peter's pipe I knew immediately. After all these years, through all of this pother of control and shortage Peter still gets Barney's as at Brougham Place. I wonder did he ever own a Brougham before I knew him, or did he live at Brougham Place because he couldn't afford the real thing. I shivered under the shadow of the idiocy of this curious mentality as little fragments, indigestible diamonds of conversation returned to me: 'Mitcham, how did you get along with the Rostand', when I was the only one in the room and he needn't have used my name, and the sequel: 'De Bergerac himself is actually more important, although Mercurial, a sort of literary Hermes; you see rather an animated and deliberate revulsion from the Cartesian position, as, later, Hume, but whereas Hume might be the progenitor of Wittgenstein, in the one essential respect of course, De Bergerac could have had a lot of influence on Carlyle, perhaps even Lewis . . . Did I give you the third volume of Childermass?' I knew by then that that sort of talk can go on for hours effortlessly and impressively but still be wholly specious, just a chain, not even a silver chain of song, rather a clanking chain of a captive. I was like a ferret watching him then, marvelling at his rabbit-like dopiness, pitying his craving for the dope of names, even anticipating him and throwing him baits, testing the curious phenomenon which he represented. The Duplex Process for steel-making I found him not interested in, but when I mentioned the

Siemens-Martin process (the same) he came to life: was it anything like the Bessemer Process, and by the way, had I heard that the last Graf Zeppelin had come to grief? Yes, I thought, jumping from one German name to another, such an overt line of communication, here surely is a recognisable mania; I thought he surely could not be long in going off his head. But now I know better. He will keep it up for ever at the same steady pace and get all the audience he needs, prototype and symbol of the essentially ineducable.

I heard them shuffling to get out. Peter was the last to get off the tram. It was Addison Road stop. He hurried into step with his companions and I saw him in the full for a few seconds before the tram got away again. He was old, shockingly old, and scraggily bald, and dirty, the grease of some useless workshop process on his clothes and on one cheek, and his walk was weary it seemed to me. And then he looked at me and saw nothing, not even the guilt which must have instantly dilated my pupils, but I saw what made me miserable for a week, just a factory hand, a rabbit harnessed into a machine he does not understand, grubby and stupefied from feeding on newspaper and radio pap. He looked, in some way he looked, different from his broken-mouthed and corrupt companions, latrine loiterers, workshop gossips I knew them for, but whatever that difference it was now inoperative, for he was functionally one of them; but, I remembered, he always had been a good deal too friendly. What was so pitiful was that these ludicrous and inferior creatures regarded him as something less than equal, of his being gentle they made weakness, for them his knowledge was out of date, his speech no doubt a workshop joke and byword.

In such moments we know that time is the curse which Eve earned for us. Who is now sitting under the Jacarandas so far and so long away, removed from us now by hundreds of revolutions of the Earth and fourteen enormous irretraceable orbital journeys? And all the atoms which were part of our corporal substance then are now dissociated and lost, and even what remains in our minds is dulled and fragmentary. Sometimes we feel that we MUST go back, that it is more important to be again where we had been before, but then we know that even if the giant inertia could be overthrown and our return embarked we should be travellers without destination. What was once never can be again; the arrow points one way, and, anyway, when we were there we were wishing we were somewhere else, so why not here and now. Peter doesn't know. He is not the same man. He has taken his Strychnine in small doses, but I see the change in one scene and it looks a lot, that is all.

ANTIAR

THE POISON-TREE

Upon the desert's blazing sands,
In harsh and arid desolation,
Like some dread sentry Antiar stands,
Austere, alone in all creation.

Once on those thirsting plains to him
By angered Nature life was granted,
And in each mortal leaf and limb
And root the poison was implanted.

The venom trickles through the bark,
Beneath the noon sun liquefying,
And cools when day's heat yields to dark,
In thick transparent resin lying.

To Antiar's boughs no bird dare fly
Nor tiger come; the wind's black eddy
Enwraps the death-tree, then whirls by,
With noxious vapours charged already.

And if some storm-cloud, as it goes,
The tree's dense leaves should chance to moisten,
Into the burning sands there flows
A rain that bears in it the poison.

But once with regal glance a man
To Antiar did a man send faring,
Who thus obediently ran
And hastened back, the poison bearing.

He brought as well a withered bough
As homeward with the gum he wended,
And meanwhile from his pallid brow
The sweat in icy streams descended.

He brought the gum—but in his cave
Upon his bed of bark did sicken,
Until by death the wretched slave
Before his mighty lord was stricken.

His prince the poison used to coat
The arrows faithful to his orders,
With which he ruinously smote
The foreign tribes across his borders.

A. S. Pushkin..

(Translated from the Russian by R. H. Morrison.)

LINES OF COMMUNICATION

By Murray Gordon

In the Northern Territory the kite-hawks fly about like leaves and scraps of paper thrown high and played with by the wind. But it is the hawks themselves that play with the wind, flying against and with it, and many a soldier has been lost out of his dreary army life through watching them from his bed during a long hot afternoon, as they glide, soar, float, hang, wheel and swoop.

One Sunday, two men from the workshops section climbed the highest peak of the nearby hills to see what they could see. What they saw was a vast space of the warm land of the great Northern Territory, the ranges and the plains, the two rivers, one near, and one so far away that they knew it to be where it was only by the growth they could see along its banks.

The first of the men—the big one—gave his friend a light, and smoke rose from the two cigarettes, while they sat on rocks and looked down over the land.

The land spread in warm colours and soft folds eastward to Arnhem Land and northward to the Arafura Sea.

But mostly the men looked in neither of these directions, but to the west, to watch the hawks that flew in hundreds round the hills.

"You'd think", said the big man, "that there was something dead over there in them hills. Carrion, sort of . . ."

The other man nodded. "Mmm", he said, "might be a kangaroo. Some of the boys went out shooting last week-end."

"Yeah", said the big man, "the way they fly around, like . . ."

The two threw down their cigarette butts and the big man stood.

"Coming back to camp?"

The other rose, and both began climbing down.

And over the hills the hawks were flying, and all the men in the camps in that area who watched them, saw them as they had seen them for all the months past, and no soldier saw in them and their flying that day something strange and urgent. The hawks that circled were watching others on the ground below, that fed on a corpse. But it was not a kangaroo that they fed on.

The feasting birds, suspicious of each other, tore at flesh, opened their wings and flapped and fought. And those that tore pieces of flesh away flew off and perched in trees to eat it.

After three days there was nothing there but a framework of bones that once had been a man, and a dirty towel. And two goannas ran around the prone skeleton and chased each other over its ugly

bones that lay amongst the giant ant hills, so many of them that it seemed a graveyard, while a hot wind blew down the barren valley and no cloud floated in the sky.

* * * *

The Ox woke up sweating. Before he had gone to sleep he knew that he would wake up like this. He did what he usually did, he climbed from under his mosquito net, got out of bed and pulled down his towel. He went outside the tent to wipe the sweat from his body.

It was a clear night, brilliant with the light of stars. The air was clear and cool after a hot evening, and there was no sound. The camp slept.

The Ox wondered why he was awake. He shouldn't be sweating; it wasn't a hot night, it hadn't been for some weeks. He looked for the Southern Cross, now tipped on its side. He pulled on his sandshoes and stood outside the tent, listening.

He thought he would go and have a shower.

But he stood still, listening.

And he heard his name called.

He knew that he had to go, and he went down past the woodpile, past the mess, to the track that led out of the camp.

The Ox stopped, and stood with shaking legs, his breath held. Down at the bend in the track by the water tank, men were waiting. And they were watching him. I think, he said, that I had better go back to bed. But the eyes, shining from the darkness, drew him down the track. They waited for him, and he walked slowly to them, trying to keep from recognizing them. But as he drew near to them he saw Eric, while Ian and Robbie were sitting on the other side of the track with their backs against trees.

"Hullo", he said. They looked at him but didn't speak. He wrapped his towel more firmly round him.

"Where's Don?" he said. And they all turned to a man lying in the grass. The Ox walked over.

"Hullo, Don."

The man was lying on his back with his eyes closed.

"He's asleep", The Ox said to the other men.

"Going far tonight?" he asked them.

But they smoked cigarettes and ignored him.

"I don't think I can come", he said, "look how I'm dressed. I haven't got a rifle, not even a water bottle."

A sergeant came along to the group. "Has every man got his rations?"

"I haven't got mine", The Ox said.

The sergeant went past them. "Have you all got your rations?" he said to men further along the track.

"Where do you get your rations?" The Ox asked Eric.

Eric looked at him blankly, as if he hadn't heard what he had said.

"That was Sgt. Champson, wasn't it?" The Ox said.

"How have you been, Eric?" he said. But Eric took no notice of him, and looked at the sinking stars along with all the other soldiers.

"Prepare to advance!" the platoon commander called from further down the track.

"Prepare to advance!" Sgt. Champson called.

"But I'm not in this, am I?" The Ox cried. "Does he mean me? Have I got to come? I'm different, I'm not even dressed."

The men lurched to their feet, shouldered their haversacks and picked up their rifles.

"Don't I get a rifle?" The Ox cried.

"Advance!" cried the platoon commander.

"Advance!" repeated the sergeant.

"I'm not armed", The Ox cried.

The men moved past him.

"Have I got to come too?" he cried, and followed them.

And for fifty minutes they marched through the stinging grass and the scanty trees, and The Ox kept up with them by watching and following the heels of the man in front of him. He followed over the jagged stones, along the slippery kangaroo tracks and through the dry, resisting grass. When the platoon commander's whistle blew they rested.

"What place is this?" The Ox cried, "I don't know any country that looks like this. I have been all round these places at the week-ends, but I don't know where we are now."

They looked at him with cold, hard looks, and Eric began laughing a low and bitter laugh that became choked into sobs. The Ox sought Don again, and found him lying on the ground, his haversack a cushion for his shoulders. The Ox knelt beside him.

"Don", he said, "you've got to tell me what you're thinking."

When he looked at him it seemed that Don smiled.

"Prepare to advance!"

"I've got to go too", The Ox said.

And birds that had been disturbed from their sleep on tree branches and which were ready to fly away from danger, watched and saw the shadow lost into the night's blacker shadow, and when the

sound of feet had faded and been muffled into the silence of the night, the birds fluttered their wings and folded them, and slept again.

* * * *

Jonesy was bright and cheerful, even at breakfast.

"Good morning, men", he said, coming into the mess. "Don't get up, don't get up."

The men already seated grunted at him, and sipped their tea, waiting for breakfast.

"Shower a bit nippy this morning, eh?"

"Mmm", Pop said, "but I didn't see you there, Jonesy."

"I had mine before any of youse were up."

The steward brought their breakfast.

"A Nightingale Sang in Bartlett Pears", Jonesy chanted, "Why can't they vary it sometimes?"

"Eat your vitamins and shut up."

"Enter the provost", Jonesy murmured, and as the man came to their table, he said to him "Morning, feller, got the good guts for us?"

"What about?"

"You know what about."

"The Ox, you mean?"

Jonesy turned to the others. "Catches on, don't he?"

"Have they caught him yet?"

"Not that I know of," the provost said.

"No, and they never will", Grant said, "it makes me sick the way so many of them get away with it."

"There's not many going through these days", the provost said, "we're picking them up at Tennant's every week."

"I bet I could go through if I wanted to", Jonesy said. "Bet you I could get away with it, I bet you I could."

"Once you get to Alice you're sweet."

"Jesus Christ", Terry said, "beans again!"

"Anybody who wants mine can have 'em", Jonesy said. "Don't all speak at once."

"What I mean to say is", Grant said, "I hope he's caught and gets sent to boob. I've got no time for a man who goes through. It's not as if he's got any ties, he's a single man with no responsibilities . . ."

"Pass the salt."

". . . he had a soft job, short hours and easy work, he had a good boss to work for, he had all the amenities you could get, in fact, everything . . . He was on a good bludge here . . ."

"Good luck to him, that's what I say."

". . . I think a man ought to be honest with himself. There he was you couldn't get away from him, telling you he wanted to be up with his cobbers in the front line, doing the dirty work, fighting, telling you every mealtime how this wasn't the sort of work he joined the army for. Then why the hell did he leave his unit . . .?"

"OK, keep your shirt on", Jonesy said.

". . . If he wanted to win glory and honour for himself, he should have stayed with his unit. He wasn't kicked out, he applied for a transfer, he told me that himself, he's fit, he's A1 . . ."

"They can stick all their glory and honour", Jonesy said, "I'll stay right where I am. As my dear old granny used to say:

'May all your army service be
Safe along the L of C'."

". . . Just a lot of bloody talk, wanting to be back with his unit . . ."

"Cigarette?" Jack said, "Cigarette anybody?" putting them back into his pocket before they could answer.

". . . I hope he cops it good and hard. They ought to shoot them, like they did in the last war . . ."

"It's ten past eight", Jack said.

"Squeezing me", Jonesy said.

The others rose too and went out of the mess, leaving Grant alone, drinking tea and scowling.

A LETTER OF JOHN PAYNE COLLIER

By S. Musgrove

John Payne Collier (1789-1883) was one of the more breezy personalities among nineteenth century English scholars. A man of large vitality and wide range, but questionable honesty, his editions of and commentaries on Elizabethan plays and poems were unfortunately marred by his habit of inventing evidence when evidence could not be found. His forgeries extended over the fields of public records, Shakespearian folios and Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare. Exposure, when it came, neither daunted his cheerfulness nor abridged his longevity.

In a copy of the first (1831) edition of Collier's *History of English Dramatic Poetry* which has lately come into the Dixson Library of the New England University College, was found an MS. letter of Collier's, written in his old age apparently to some person who had desired an epistolary acquaintance with him. It is worth recording for the impression it gives of the liveliness of this ninety-two-year-old scholar:

(*Written upside down.*)
I read but I do not now know the 4th Canto of "Child Harold"—indeed I do not think I have a copy of it—*culpâ meâ.* T[urn] O[ver].

Riverside,
3 July 1880.

Dear Sir

I write instantly to thank you, and (if I can) to remove a false impression. I never considered you a "nuisance" (your own word) and if you lived within a reasonable distance, I should be glad to make your "acquaintance"; but at my time of life I have not health nor spirits for much intercourse or indeed for any new friendships.

I like your energy, your tastes and your pursuits: above all, I like you for liking my "Poet's Pilgrimage" which has been some 50 years in print, and never attracted the notice of anybody, or at least very few who could relish and understand it. You did both and I was thankful, and meant to say so—heartily thankful.

All health and happiness to you.

Thanks for the return of the note of the 30 unknown and unowned Sonnets.

Very sincerely yours

J. Payne Collier.

(*On back.*)

I cannot consent that you, as a lover and a judge of Poetry, should name my poor poem (such it is I humbly believe) in the same century as Spenser's F.Q.—in the same thousand years. I would give it all for that single stanza beginning

"Eftsoons they heard a most melodious sound" etc.

I feel ashamed to think of them together. Niagara and a brook! but still a brook, and the water pure and sparkling: that I will say of my P.P.—my poor P.P.

Pardon this shabby scrawl of disgusting egotism—nearly 92 years old, but still a boy of 22.

The poem "The Poet's Pilgrimage" which is referred to in the letter is Collier's own work; it is an allegorical poem of four cantos, published anonymously in 1822 and under the author's name in 1825. Obscurity has overtaken it. The Spenser reference is Bk. II, Cant. xii, st. 70, which runs in full:

> Eftsoones they heard a most melodious sound,
> Of all that mote delight a daintie eare,
> Such as attonce might not on liuing ground,
> Saue in this Paradise, be heard elsewhere:
> Right hard it was, for wight, which did it heare,
> To read, what manner musicke that mote bee:
> For all that pleasing is to liuing eare,
> Was there consorted in one harmonee,
> Birdes, voyces, instruments, windes, waters, all agree.

The reference to the sonnet-collection is too vague to allow of identification.

There is nothing to show the identity of the person to whom the letter was written. The book in which the letter was found was once the property of Professor J. Le Gay Brereton, but he was born too late (1871) to have been the recipient. The letter may have been in the book when purchased, but there is nothing to indicate this.

DUCK

By Fred Buchan

She lived in her own unpretentious house on the harbour-side (that's to say, on the downward side), off Vaucluse Road, hidden from the public pavement, but open for the admiration of passengers on the two-story 'bus battering the track to Rose Bay. A vehicular glance, separated from any subsequent other by half an hour.

Yet Finkelstein (first name Oscar) was able to remember its street-wall and hedge of roses; also, a raised lawn submerging the bungalow beyond, except for its roof.

He dreamed he lived there—that he had a wife—and at once transparent children began throwing toy aeroplanes across the grass. All these children had Finkelstein faces; except one, who must have come from next door.

Neither romantically inclined, nor true to its time-table, the matter-of-fact 'bus struggled vulgarly up the hill, past the church with stupid poplars, past the convent, where it lunged to the right, jostling trams along the highway that runs between villas dwarfed by flats into the heart of Rose Bay. *N.B.*: For "heart" read "pub".

* * * *

Oscar walked into the bar, where Jim brought him "half of old".

"I—al—ways—drink—beer—" began Oscar slowly. "Becositdont-tastelikebeer!" continued Jim, resolved to have it over.

The old gag.

In fact, his only conversation.

With windows boarded up, the pub was dark inside, and hardly saved from funeral-parlour atmosphere by daffodils whose over-honeyed sweetness made common nectar with other odours in the air.

Oscar pulled at his not-enormous moustache, waiting for small thoughts to assemble in his brain.

Flowers excited him. He must avoid excitement.

"The left ventricle of your heart—most important of all—" his doctor had said, "is not standing up to its job. If you force it, it will *BREAK*!!"

Out again, in the almost hysterical sunshine, he felt damn' mad.

Bus-rides. Beer. Daffodils. Newspaper headings . . . *JAPS GO BUG-HOUSE* . . . Aircraft pretending to drop something on Finnigan's shop. Policemen. Diggers and Doughboys. *TRAMS*. Two-way taxi-drivers, both swearing at him!

Then a dog (without eyes, ears, or nose); entirely teeth.

A good job he had brought smelling salts in his waistcoat pocket.

A walk home might steady him. "Shouldn't do it, though. Too up hill; and too many crossings."

Soon Oscar edged into Vaucluse Road, bowling along with the majestic aplomb of a one-beer-power machine.

The 'bus-track he was following flickered in and out of the shadows of old homes and new architecturalosities and Moreton Bay figs.

He sniffed the fragrance of azaleas; heard a puppy mock his perambulation with cries of "Left! Left!" . . . like a "s'arn-ma'or" busy at his squad; and, a moment later, lowered his eyes (not all the way to the ground) when a girl in slacks and horrible lip-do came inelegantly along. This girl was pursued by another girl, prettier than the first. She warmed him with her eyes; said "Good morning, Mr. Finkelstein." Then ran, and ran, and ran.

Oscar, winding a horn that didn't exist, continued down Vaucluse Road; forgot he was doctors' meat, and hummed the tune of a bee which is no tune at all.

Without knowing it, he had arrived alongside the bungalow previously seen by him from the top of the 'bus. There was no mistaking the wall, or rose-hedge: and, on a tip-toe view across the gate, he admired steps cascading to the hermitage below.

Further off, Sydney . . . an aerial city . . . with no line of divergence between waterway and sky.

Here, for a moment, he snoozed, or relaxed unconsciously; becoming, as it were, part of his surroundings: a visitor-speck among motes and flower-dust, denizens of the garden parading to and fro.

Things, hitherto hidden, materialised. One, particularly. A treelet cut to the figure of a duck: a duck that could neither walk nor quark, nor make a mess, nor swim. Kipling might have classed it with his shipboard soldier "a kind of giddy harumfrodite". *Anatina,* and *Arbor,* too!

Oscar, touched by its helplessness, planned some release; came back into his coat and trousers on the street side of the gate, and—what next?

While he drew himself away, a bud from the bush tapped Oscar's hat. On the defensive, Oscar pinched it off high up the neck; did the same to five others, and felt guilty when a woman at an opposite window ironed him out with a look; hot, and heavily pressed.

For several days after this adventure the roses, from a pleasure-vase in Oscar's flat, waved to passers-by, seeming to say, "If you are

native-born of Vaucluse Road, will you please tell our family we're too happy to come back?"

Oscar was kind to the roses, changing their water every day; and, every day, cutting their stalks—even as a flapper cutteth her nails. Selah.

And when, at last, they began to die, he gave them aspirins, so that they became ghosts of sweetness in the night, happying the room where he slept; where he dreamt of them—and of the duck.

Soon, he stole fresh roses; and when these, in their time, perished too, he stole again.

Stole always with oblique intention: the duck-dendron's release.

Stole to reconnoitre.

On September 2, returning from his daily bout, he left the 'bus at the convent corner, and snooped downhill till he came to the rose-hedge where he helped himself carefully, so as not to hurt the tree. And then, walked on.

No harm could come of it.

Possibly, a cut here, and a cut there, did actual good, smartening up the hedge or posting the sap to some other flower too weak to blow.

Disturbances were few, because the road-front really composed a back-yard; and the house, itself, looking towards the harbour bridge, was so rapt by the prospect as not to care much what happened anywhere else.

Yet Oscar had the impression that he was being watched; an impression which grew into solid belief, when, one day, he saw a handsome girl in military uniform running up the steps, just too late to find him under the hedge.

He crossed to the other side of the road, trailing his left leg as though with a nail in the boot.

Yet, while he went, he planned ab-duck-tion (Excuse the pun!): and SUCCEEDED, on the same night, during a storm of rain.

Brought the baby-plant to his bathroom; laid it on the seat of the—Um?—and, himself, slid suddenly unconscious into the bath.

But his pulse, which had stopped, only as a dog will do (for occasion), began its job again.

Simultaneously, after lots of boot-noise, Oscar rose from his not so "watery nest": then went to the sitting-room cupboard and managed a drink.

After that, he valeted the duck for many weeks, until it Arabian Nighted itself; which is to say it became a small-leafed privet bush, innocent of head or tail. Nevertheless, when Oscar looked, without

knowing what a palimpsest was, he saw "duck gone to cover" in the palimpsest way.

His next care was to put back the bush in the place from whence it came: but, before that could happen, he must take bearings . . . confide in his star.

Soon, one breakfast time, receiving bread from the baker, he heard Doctor Hupper mention an outsize funeral, billed to start from Vaucluse Road at three o'clock that day, "the hoose appasite Dean Ramsay's . . . ane wi' a glaizit verannah. I dinna remem'er the name."

Oscar's heart stretched itself like a cockerel and clapped delighted wings, while the kitchen clock threw its hands excitedly round, signalling the master not to waste time.

Within an hour of Hupper's information, the first forward move was successfully made.

Oscar, having cadged a lorry-ride as far as Picket's Lane, hid his darling in a grassed-over pit, only yards away from her original home.

After which, he returned to his flat; exultant, though alone.

* * * *

By a quarter past three, the funeral procession had whizzed off to Waverley (not crawled, as predecessor funerals have done); and now, the road lay empty, with never a soul in sight.

The only sound, a futtering roar of aircraft from the gut of the bay.

An ideal moment; and Oscar knew it. So, leaving his hide-out in Picket's Lane, he stepped forth with the restored privet bush (wrapped) in his hands.

A choir of birds carolled "Blue Bonnets are over the Border" loudly enough to bring Mrs. Plikk (the lady-of-many-windows) to her balcony, or spy-out station.

Joy! Joy! Through two pairs of spectacles, she saw Oscar and hurried telephoneward in order to advise her vis-à-vis bungalow to be en garde.

"He's coming down the road."

"Now."

"The man who steals the roses."

"You must be quick!"

The handsome neighbour (who, after all, was also neighbour only to the deceased) climbed the steps, pushed through the gate, and found Oscar, with the transformed tree, metaphorically rooted to the ground.

She said: "Oh!——My duck!"

Oscar coloured, as though the words conveyed some compliment to himself; elevated the privet bush, whispered "Left ventricle". Then bowed.

And couldn't get up.

The bitch-lieutenant and a constable half off his motor-bike rushed forward.

No words. A quick interchange of looks; and the job in hand.

Under her directions, the policeman helped Oscar through the gate: dumped him on the lawn where he convalesced enough to utter "Cripes!"

The lieutenant remarked, "We mustn't spoil him!", and handed the policeman seven pounds, which she guessed too little, since he remained (like an actor, not sure of his exit) fixed to the spot.

Then she remembered he had heard her say "My duck!"; and wondered again whether seven were enough.

But it was love for the lieutenant that kept him; and when, at last, he moved towards her, she saved her bacon by pulling down her head.

Actually, he had been within an ace of giving her the odd note back; and now, soured by the rebuff, rubbed the inside of his cap and vamoosed.

Soon, Oscar was able to walk down the sharp steps; and thence on to the verandah of the house where it only needed the gentlest push to bring him home.

After that, he sat in a padded cane-chair while he re-recovered; the lieutenant, herself, ringing up his landlady to explain.

* * * *

Well————————————————————?

They married; and she produced children with Finkelstein faces; except Murielle, who was the image of a . . . . . (Name-spelt-backward-on-the-gate.)

SHAKESPEARIAN NOTES

PROSPERO'S ISLE REVISITED

(A Few Notes on *The Tempest*)

After listening-in to a rendition of Shakespeare's *Tempest* not long ago, I went to the play itself and was more than ever impressed with its beauty. Surely it is one of the loveliest of all plays! In growing old I do not grow out of the *Tempest* at least. As I read it, this time, I kept a technical weather-eye open as well, and was surprised at its variety, its rhythmical and metrical variety, and shall here mention a few devices that took my eye. First was the riming of two consecutive speeches by Juno and Ceres in the masque that the play contains:

> Honour, riches, marriage blessing,
> Long continuance and increasing,
> Hourly joys be still upon you!
> Juno sings her blessings on you.
>
> Earth's increase, foison, plenty,*
> Barns and garners never empty;
> Vines with clustering bunches growing;
> Plants with goodly burthen bowing;
> Spring come to you at the farthest
> In the very end of harvest!
> Scarcity and want shall shun you;
> Ceres' blessing so is on you.

This sort of riming, though practised at times by Rossetti (some critics 'went him butchers' over it), is looked upon in many quarters as an ultra-modern invention. 'Farthest—harvest!' that is assonance at its best. A little further on in the *Tempest* are other couplets in the same vein:

> You sun-burn'd sicklemen, of August weary,
> Come hither from the furrow, and be merry,
> Make holiday; your rye-straw hats put on,
> And these fresh nymphs encounter every one
> In country footing . . . .

For metrical variety, consider Ariel's last song: "Where the bee sucks, there suck† I." The trochaic pattern of the first five lines changes beautifully to the dactyllic of the last two.

Another of Ariel's songs is also metrically remarkable: "Come unto these yellow sands."

Not only are trochaic and iambic lines intermingled here in masterly fashion, but there are two lines (2 and 4) that have three stresses for four syllables: a phenomenon that tempts one to apply the term 'spondee' to a foot of English verse, though the original spondee denoted a foot of two long syllables, not two stressed ones.

> And thĕn | tăke hănds ||
> The wil'd | wăves whĭst ||

This sort of thing became so unusual in English verse that when Yeats used it in 'Innisfree', he appeared to be doing something revolutionary:

> And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

---

* This line is apparently irregular, but I incline to think either (1) the poet meant Earth's to be dis-syllabic, earthës, as of old; or, more probably, (2) foison is trisyllabic, fo-i-son.

† It is extraordinary how this word is persistently replaced by 'lurk', just as 'sip' replaces 'sup' in Jonson's "Drink to me only with thine eyes", where the author wrote 'But might I of Jove's nectar sup'. We get even 'Love's nectar sip'.

This line contains three consecutive stresses.

Prospero's epilogue, too, exhibits a pleasant variety in dealing with a pattern fundamentally trochaic. In part it runs:

> But release me from my bands
> With the help of your good hands:
> Gentle breath of yours my sails
> Must fill, or else my project fails,
> Which was to please. Now I want
> Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
> And my ending is despair,
> Unless I be relieved by prayer.

Here line 4 is iambic, and is run on pleasingly from line 3. Line 5 is a study, because after the full stop the trochaic measure is resumed so firmly. Much art in that full stop! The sixth line is extraordinary, even for Shakespeare, for assuming that the first word is a monosyllable in effect if not in fact (the secondary word "sprite" arose in this fashion), we have then as scansion-pattern /oo/ /oo/ which looks like two choriambics, or, more simply, as though Shakespeare merely counted his stressed syllables and let the unstressed take care of themselves, which is what some modern writers maintain is their practice and the essence of 'speech-rhythm'. Line 5 could be regarded as being composed in the same manner.

Much has of recent years been said of the freedom with which Shakespeare handled blank verse in his later plays, some writers even conveying the impression that it was 'free verse' and not blank verse at all. To me the *Tempest's* norm is undoubtedly the blank-verse line, as unmistakably as in Prospero's "Our revels now are ended. . . ."

The rhythmical and metrical variation of the *Tempest's* blank verse is a long study in itself, a study that I shall not here concern myself with, but I shall not close without mention of the way in which Shakespeare built up compound words, a practice much in vogue in recent years and being now subject to censure. In Prospero's speech above, there is 'cloud-capped' which in Shakespeare's time must have been a beautifully fresh coinage. Later in the play, Ariel is ordered to make Caliban and Company 'more *pinch-spotted* than pard or cat o' mountain'. 'Pinch-spotted' is very effective, and, most effective of all perhaps, Ariel speaks of 'the lime-grove which *weather-fends*' Prospero's cell. Whence I deduce (as if any deduction were necessary!) that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with verbal compounds; all depends on how each separate feat is brought off.

In general, then, even a casual acquaintance with the technical side of the *Tempest* prompts one to the world-old attitude: "Is there anything whereof it may be said, 'See, this is new'? It hath been already of old time, which was before us."

MARTIN HALEY.

GHOSTLY TESTIMONY

Commenting on the suggestion that Hamlet's delay in achieving his revenge is partly explained by the practical difficulty that he could not prove the King's guilt by citing the testimony of a Ghost, J. M. Robertson (*Shakespeare's Work of Transmutation*) asks "Why did he not at the outset tell both Horatio and Marcellus what the Ghost had told him?", and adds "They would have believed, and been believed, readily enough. Given a Ghost who is credited by the *audience*, why should he not be credited by the characters?"

Now here there are, meo quidem judicio, two glaring errors: an error of psychology, and an error of fact. First, the audience does not "credit" the ghost. Its attitude is merely one of 'willing suspension of disbelief'. Moreover, the audience is well aware that it will not be called upon to try or sentence the king, or to carry the sentence into effect, a circumstance which vitiates the parallel between it and the characters. Secondly, on the question of fact, the audience has both seen and heard the ghost, Horatio and Marcellus have seen, but not heard, whilst the rest of the characters have done neither. Therefore, the fact—if it were a fact—that the audience credits the ghost, could provide no argument that the characters would credit it. So easily does 'realism' overstep reality.

A. E. Pearse.

SOUTHERLY

THE McKELLAR NUMBER

(Reprinted from *The Sydney University Union Recorder,* June 7)

Southerly has done a fine service for Australian literature by devoting more than half of its current issue to J. A. R. McKellar's unpublished poetry. McKellar died in 1932, soon after the appearance of his only book, *Twenty-Six,* and thus thirteen years have passed before any serious consideration has been paid to him at such length.

For my part, I have always been convinced that McKellar's work, tragically brief as it was, is sufficient enough (and good and pregnant enough) to win him attention for many years to come. It was my misfortune that I met McKellar only once and that was a few weeks before his death. We drank some beer with Frank Johnson, and talked optimistically (the only way to talk) about the future of the Jacaranda series of Australian poetry-books which Johnson was then beginning, and which to our fond eyes at least, seemed lit with an almost supernatural shine.

Johnson and I were nebulously hopeful. McKellar's optimism was more practical, with shrewd reservations and an astringent sense of commercial reality. His criticism was always careful and severe, whether of prosody, fantasy or a balance sheet. His verdicts were correct, with the dispassionate rectitude of surgery. He wrote to me several times with suggestions for minor corrections of my own Jacaranda book, which was then in the press, and although at first I found these amendments painful, I quickly realised their justification.

It was McKellar who wrote the preliminary manifesto for the Jacaranda Tree series. Some of it is worth quoting: "It is not intended to demonstrate the existence of any school of writing; each book will be as diverse in subject as the invention of its author, and the reflection of an individual *Australian* outlook on a world not always perfect, but on occasion fair. We emphasise the *Australian*; of recent years, the critic lip has been apt to curl in scorn at the first crack of the stockwhip, and the nostril to quiver at the mere mention of the eucalypt on the printed page. This mental attitude was

undoubtedly salutary for a period, when our literary expression might well have been described as unconscious, but to keep it up now is simply to twist the hat in the hands of a literature grown only too self-conscious. We have grown up, and it is time we proved it, not by boasting of our birth, nor yet by being ashamed of it, but simply by recording the event as one incident in a lifetime, and getting on with the real work."

Southerly's memoir, by Mr. J. W. Gibbes, reveals much of McKellar at which I had previously only guessed. I had known something of his joy (and surpassing ability) in vigorous sport, and had heard from other sources of the brilliant career which seemed assured to him in the dizzier altitudes of banking. Such a conjunction of talents was astounding. I could think of only one other writer (and that Thomas Love Peacock) who had been able to combine the brain of the accountant with the brain of the poet.

Mr. H. M. Green has compared McKellar to Chatterton, but the analogy seems to me to be a wrong one. In his approach and awareness, at least, McKellar was infinitely more of the adult than Chatterton; even his Jacobite affectations (by no means more boyish than our Grecian obsession of the Twenties) were reasonably founded, and not merely sentimental. My own prototype for McKellar (if we must have one) is James Elroy Flecker, and I was astonished to find, in the note by Mr. Gibbes, that he read and put aside Flecker "as damned of the gods and men." It has always appeared to me that, of English poets of this century, Flecker answered most nearly what McKellar demanded of poetry. Flecker's "Parnassian" theories in particular, his detached and objective striving for classic beauty, must have awoken approval in McKellar as I knew him.

The previously unpublished poems, which Southerly has now given us, are, of course, unequal and erratic, but none would have been unworthy of *Twenty-Six*, from which, perhaps, McKellar's whim to have a total of 26 poems kept some of them out. "Assonances", "A Nineteenth Century Epitaph", "April Memorial" and "Fourth Napoleon" are indeed, I think, as good as anything he ever wrote. So, too, is "The Ribbon and the Rose", which I saw and admired twelve years ago in manuscript. I have a delighted memory as well of a fragmentary satire on banking which Frank Johnson showed me in manuscript. *Southerly's* collection of these pieces will serve to place on record the magnificent quality, the music and richness and austere discipline, of a poet who died before he could give Australian literature the fuller masterpieces which were within him.

KENNETH SLESSOR.

WRITER AND READER

SCHOLARSHIP AND SKELTON

John Skelton, Poet Laureate. By Ian A. Gordon. (Melbourne University Press, 1943. 12s. 6d.)

"God help any poet who hopes to be rescued from oblivion by the scholars!" wrote Richard Hughes in the introduction to his selection from Skelton's poems issued in 1924. "Only one, the Rev. Alexander Dyce", he continues in the next paragraph, "has taken [Skelton] at all seriously." Yet it is to Dyce's edition in 1843 of *The Poetical Works* that Hughes owes his own text and, one would add, his own knowledge of Skelton. It was the scholar Dyce who rescued this poet, not from oblivion but from obloquy, after three centuries. Since the *Pithy pleasaunt and profitable workes* of 1568 there had been two reprints—in 1736 and in 1810 (Chalmers' *English Poets*)—various reprints of "The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng", with an edition in 1718, and general selections in *The Muses' Library,* 1737, and Percy's *Reliques,* 1765. But, though the anonymous editor of 1718 pleaded for "Elynour Rummyng"—"this merry Old Tale"—as "a just and natural Description of those merry Wassail Dayes, and of the Humours of our Great Grandames", even comparing these with Chaucer's characters as praised by Dryden, Pope in 1737 damned Skelton with the epithet "beastly", speaking of the recent recension of his works as "consisting almost wholly of Ribaldry, Obscenity, and Billingsgate Language". Dyce, prompted by an appreciation of Southey's in *The Quarterly Review,* not only presented a good text of Skelton but also annotated it as fully as he could and—what was even more important—gave a just account, according to his lights, of the poet and his writings. Other scholars too treated Skelton "seriously". A selection "intended primarily for the student of early Tudor literature", based on Dyce, was well-edited and -introduced by W. H. Williams in 1902. An edition of "Magnyfycence", by J. S. Farmer, followed in 1910. Finally, in 1920, appeared J. M. Berdan's *Early Tudor Poetry,* containing a notable appraisal of Skelton.

Since the publication of Mr. Hughes's book of excerpts with its much-promising little-performing introduction ("consisting almost wholly of . . . Billingsgate Language" against scholars), there have come, principally, Robert Graves's popular selection (with text from Dyce, modernized); Edmund Blunden's essay (reprinted in his *Votive Tablets,* 1931) for *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1929; Philip Henderson's edition (text from Dyce, modernized), 1931; W. H. Auden's estimate in *The Great Tudors,* 1935; and three biographical-critical studies in close succession: L. J. Lloyd's *John Skelton, A Sketch of his Life and Writings,* 1938; William Nelson's *John Skelton, Laureate,* 1939; and Ian A. Gordon's *John Skelton, Poet Laureate,* 1943 (the centenary year of Dyce's edition). By the time Auden wrote, his fellow-poets (notably Graves) had begun to imitate Skeltonics: an impressive recent example is G. Rostrevor Hamilton's "Apollyon", first published in *The Times Literary Supplement* on May 18, 1940.

Interest in Skelton thus stands at its highest point since his works were first collected and his admirer Thomas Churchyarde wrote of him as one that

> Hath helpt our Englishe toung,
> That first was baes and brute,

and as

A poet for his arte,
Whoes iudgment suer was hie,
And had great practies of the pen,
His works they will not lie;
His terms to taunts did lean,
His talke was as he wraet,
Full quick of witte, right sharp of words,
And skilfull of the staet;
Of reason riep and good,
And to the hatefull mynd,
That did disdain his doings still,
A skornar of his kynd;
Most pleasant euery way,
As poets ought to be, . . .

The decline in Skelton's fame will naturally be traced and the reasons for it sought. Apparently it is due to the strongest impression that his work left: "His terms to taunts did lean"—that is, in "Against the Scottes", "Why Come ye Nat to Courte?", "Ware the Hauke!", and "Colyn Cloute". Colyn, as a representative man of the people, uses a "style rude and playne" and, in denouncing abuses, sets himself "to ryme or to rayle". In "Howe Collingbourne was cruelly executed for making a foolishe rime", which was added to *A Mirror for Magistrates* in 1563, the author deplored the common misconstruction of poets, thus:

Be rough in ryme, and then they say you rayle,
Though Iuuenal so be, that makes no matter . . .
Touche covertly in termes, and then you taunt,
Though praysed Poetes, alway dyd the lyke.

The allusion most probably embraces Skelton, whose lament for Edward IV appears in the original *Mirror*, 1559, wherein, also, he is mentioned by name (see Lily B. Campbell's edition, pages 235-9). Perhaps Churchyarde had in mind the reference in "Howe Collingbourne". Bearing this comment out, not twenty years after Churchyarde wrote, William Puttenham, in his *Art of English Poesie*, dismissed Skelton as "a rude railing rhymer". Then in 1579 "E.K.", perhaps harking back to Colyn Cloute's "ragged ryme", declared: "I scorne and spue out the rakehellye route of our ragged rymers (for so themselves vse to hunt the letter)"; though he or Spenser in person courteously recognised Skelton's use, before Spenser's own, of the name Colyn Cloute. Last, in 1598 Joseph Hall speaks of "angry Skelton's breathlesse rhymes".

For the Elizabethans, Skelton, as a poet, hardly existed: it was Skelton the jester, "full quick of witte, right sharp of words", who lived on—in a book of his sayings and doings, and as quoted and portrayed on the stage. Puttenham's deep damnation of the "rude railing rhymer", followed by "E.K.'s" rejection of "ragged rhymers", had implicitly set the poet Skelton back almost among Chaucer's "rum, ram, ruffians". And, in one way, that is where he really belongs—to the alliterative accentual line in English verse. The "Poems against Garnesche", for example, are highly alliterative. Gordon sets himself to show "the essentially English quality of Skelton's verse": in particular (after Henderson), that "the Skeltonic is the descendant of the Anglo-Saxon alliterative line through the alliterative revival of Middle English. The original four-stressed line", he explains, "has broken down into two short two-stressed lines,

bound together by rime. . . . The long list of English romances cited in *Phillip Sparrow* is sufficient evidence of his extensive reading in accentual Middle English verse."

Gordon is here refuting Berdan's suggestion of an origin for Skelton's line in the accentual Latin of the Middle Ages, and Nelson's claim that it is derived from rhymed Latin prose. Nelson gives an apparently convincing example, from the "Replycacioun agaynst Certayne Yong Scolers Abiured of Late", of Skelton's switching from prose to verse ("A lytell ragge of rethorike", etc.) and back again in the one sentence, the verse corresponding to the Latin which accompanies the English in the margin and here begins with rhyme: "Rhetoricari incomposite, logicari meticulose, philosophari perfunctorie, theologicari phrenetice", etc. But the English is alliterative where for the most part the Latin is not. The truth may lie between Gordon's and Nelson's arguments: that the Skeltonic, deriving from accentual verse, is an *equivalent* to rhymed Latin prose; though I incline to think that it goes back to the short alliterative rhyming lines of the romances, especially the thirteenth-century *King Horn*. Rhyme would be present or come in naturally, without having to be introduced in imitation of the Latin. Indeed, rhyme is found in *Piers Plowman*.

A direct relation between Skelton and Langland exists in "The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng", which—though Gordon omits to notice this—stems from the well-known passage in *Piers* beginning "Then goeth Glutton in and great oaths after him". But there is no need for Gordon to rest his case on Skelton's *reading* of that and other mediæval works. "Colyn Cloute" alone would show the popular origin. We are coming to realise that vernacular literature, before the introduction of printing and even long afterwards, was regularly transmitted by oral means. As it was composed for repetition, so it continued to be repeated. There seems to be no reason now for the view that Spenser was altogether unable to scan Chaucer correctly, and to reiterate that he wrote the February, May and September eclogues of *The Shepheardes Calender* in mistaken imitation of Chaucer is absurd. They belong to the strongly oral Skeltonic-mediæval tradition of popular accentual-alliterative verse. No doubt it is to these especially that Spenser's Colin Cloute (who is Spenser himself) refers when in the "envoi" he speaks—significantly, and in apparent defiance of "E.K."—of his own "ragged rymes". Here he professes to have followed, "farre off", both "Tityrus" (Chaucer), his master, and "the Pilgrim that the Ploughman playde a whyle" (Langland). As already mentioned, he also acknowledges his acquaintance with Skelton.

Having linked Skelton backward, Gordon then links him forward. "Not till the twentieth century", he writes, "were the principles of Skelton's metre recognised. The 'invention' of sprung rhythm by Gerard Manley Hopkins at the end of the nineteenth century [correction, 1875] was simply a conscious return to the principles of accentual verse and less consciously a return to the Skeltonic." He proceeds to argue from an example that "in his short-lined verse Hopkins wrote pure Skeltonics". He could also have taken "Why Come ye Nat to Courte?" and demonstrated that it is in sprung rhythm. Hopkins did not know Skelton but he had read some of *Piers Plowman* and in it found the consistent use of sprung rhythm.

All this indicates what scholarship does and may do for the interpretation of poetry. Through Gordon's book, it enables us to read Skelton's lines aright —as accentual rhyme, as sprung rhythm, as strong native English verse. We need no longer seek vainly to fit him into metrical forms or dismiss him as

uncouth. And, taking him as we find him, we realise the full range of his instrument. Now playing on two accents, now on three; doling out syllables or running lightly or rushing irresistibly over them; rhyming once, twice, thrice or more in succession; leaving a rhyme and coming back to it; drawing Latin in; capable of almost any mood, he exercises the utmost freedom. His verse mourns, flutters, hops, chirps in "Phyllyp Sparowe"; it roars with laughter in "Elynour Rummyng"; it slaps and stings in "Why Come ye Nat to Courte?"; it denounces in "Colyn Cloute"; it trips and sings in "To maystres Margaret Hussey". Can the same variability and effectiveness be claimed for any other mode of rhymed verse?

To awaken full understanding of Skelton's art is not the sole achievement of Gordon's book. It so happened that he, Lloyd of London, and Nelson of the U.S.A. were all working on the poet at the same time. Lloyd published first—an introductory sketch in which he attempted "to suggest that it will not do to dismiss Skelton briefly as a rude railing rhymester, and, by implication at least, to guard against the equally dangerous view which sees in him a tremendous and neglected genius. For he was neither of these". "A consideration of the activities of a group of scholars at the court of Henry VII", wrote Nelson in the foreword to his book, "has led me to conclude that Skelton, far from being an antic vulgarian, consciously laboured to transmute the learned humanist patterns into his native tongue." Rehabilitating, redignifying Skelton, as in his own time, is the main service Nelson performs for him. Gordon's study is "essentially an independent survey of the original sources, both manuscript and printed, for a critical reassessment" of Skelton; like Nelson, he unearthed new biographical material. Of the three works, his is undoubtedly the best-balanced, most thorough, complete, and convincing. The view of Skelton accepted will be Gordon's. Nelson's book is more freshly written; Lloyd's may be regarded as now superseded, except as a mere introduction.

It must be remembered, however, that Gordon had the advantage of seeing his fellow-researchers' work in print, and, for all his initial independence, he has certainly been enabled to build on Nelson's book especially. This being so, a little more appreciation of what Nelson did would have been gracious. There seems to be insufficient acknowledgement to him—or perhaps, merely, insufficient distinction of Gordon's own separate findings from Nelson's. In the recognition of recent work by Nelson and others, some mention might well have been made, too, of the Australian scholars Professors W. H. Williams and R. L. Dunbabin, each of whom, from Tasmania, contributed to the twentieth-century rise of interest in Skelton. We may now perhaps regard Gordon as an Australasian, since, though coming from Edinburgh, he is at present Professor of English Language and Literature in the University of New Zealand and publishes his book in Melbourne. At any rate, *John Skelton, Poet Laureate* forms a worthy completion of Australian Skeltonic effort, as it is a summary of Skeltonic knowledge and a notable piece of interpretation.

A few notes may be added.

1. Page 74: "It is probable that *Elynour Rummyng* was the immediate successor to *Phillip Sparow.*" Page 106: *"Ware the Hauke* was probably written in the first decade of the sixteenth century." Page 204 (Appendix A, "Chronology of Skelton's Life and Works"):

c. 1508 *Phillip Sparow.*
Ware the Hauke.
Elynour Rummyng.

Apparently Gordon finally decided that "Ware the Hauke!" was "the immediate successor" to "Phyllyp Sparowe".

2. Page 77: "Pope's 'beastly Skelton' is derived almost solely from a judgment of *Elynour Rummyng* that ignored its gusto and vitality." Page 200: "Marshe's complete edition was reprinted in 1736 and it was no doubt to this reprint that Pope alluded in the note to his notorious line in the *Epistle to Augustus* of 1737:

And heads of houses beastly Skelton quote, . . .

But he may also have had in mind a contemporary reprint of the despised *Elynour Rummyng* which appeared in 1718." Pope's note to his line mentions only the 1736 reprint of the complete edition.

3. Edith Sitwell's "Rose" (*Selected Poems*, page 198) is described by her as "Imitated from Skelton"—perhaps "Ware the Hauke!", to which it seems close here:

Those bright birds flock,
The butterbump, the urban
Ranee stork, the turkey-cock
(Red paladin in a turban), . . .

"Rose" is not in Skeltonics. Some suggestion of them, especially as embodying names, may, however, be found in "Popular Song" (page 200). Compare:

And Charlottine,
Adeline,
Round rose-bubbling Victorine,

and

Now Pompey's dead, Homer's read,
Heliogabalus lost his head . . .

4. "Peteuelly constraynd am I", a piece discovered in a Heber MS. and printed by Walter de Gray Birch in *The Athenæum* for November 29, 1873, is not mentioned by Gordon. Hughes added it to his selection. It has been taken as a death-bed poem, but there is no strong evidence for Skelton's authorship.

5. Gordon rejects recent doubts whether "Of the Death of the Noble Prince, Kynge Edward the Fourth" is Skelton's. "The elegy", he claims on page 47, "is the work of a young poet accepting his most accessible models, the same as those that suggested a strikingly similar elegy to young Thomas More."

6. A fragment of a morality play, printed in black-letter and dated 1533, the main character in which is "Good Order", has been recovered by George L. Frost and Ray Nash. "We conclude", they write in *Studies in Philology*, October, 1944, "that it is the play referred to by Bale as *De bono ordine*, and that there is no good reason to question the correctness of Bale's ascription of it to Skelton."

R. G. Howarth.

BRIEF CHRONICLE OF AUSTRALIAN POETRY

Fourteen Minutes: Short Sketches of Australian Poets and their Work, from Harpur to the Present Day: Based on Wireless Talks Delivered for the A.B.C. in 1942, by H. M. Green. (Angus and Robertson, 1944.)

If what follows is a review of Mr. Green's radio talks considered as a serious contribution to the criticism of Australian poetry, it is only because I fancy that the book is so offered. If it is not so, my comments might very

well be considered to be uncalled for and in doubtful taste. But I must risk that. The standards of criticism in Australia are so amorphous that the risk of giving offence is one that should be resolutely faced where it seems possible, by a forthright expression of opinion, to do anything towards a strengthening of critical attitudes. And so Mr. Green's book becomes in my mind an opportunity for outspoken comment upon the whole genre of Australian (especially what I think I shall be understood in calling Australian *official*) criticism. I have no acquaintance with Mr. Green; perhaps if I had I should be politer, but my convictions could not be different.

The talks were attractive in their time and place and the series was comprehensive and upon the whole well presented. But this attractiveness does not justify printing them, because the essentially passing and conversational point which carried them through at the time renders them unsuitable for their new form. It would be absurd to suggest that talks should never be printed. But these talks are not good enough to be offered as serious literary comment. The printed medium accentuates their superficiality in a way that is really painful to any but a superficial reader. There is nothing in Mr. Green's book to give it a claim to permanent interest.

Strictures of this kind should not be called for in a commentary on a batch of radio talks. So much is conceded. It should be enough to say that Mr. Green has at last brought out the printed version of the series of talks with which he instructed and delighted us so charmingly several years ago. Then we might add that Mr. Green is strong on the ballad, which he evidently understands and appreciates; he is weakly acquiescent about the Titans, Brennan, O'Dowd, Baylebridge, etc.; banal on Neilson, better on Mary Gilmore, and totally out of his depth in all but the most conservative of modern verse. We might say then that in our opinion there is throughout Mr. Green's volume scarcely a single statement to be found which is not sanctified in platitude. He has seen nothing and interpreted nothing which is not of the most patent obviosity. It is merely the good fortune of his readers that so much of the verse he examines is (as it needed to be in the radio context) plain and simple enough to reveal very readily its poetic value. The one positive virtue of the book is that the necessary process of simplification has resulted in the presentation of a composite and rather vivid survey of Australian poetry over the greater part of its historical and contemporary development. But nearly all Mr. Green's geese are swans, and except of the most obvious kind, his distinctions are insignificant. And lastly, one might suggest that those who feel the need of a chatty resumé of the Australian verse tradition may be glad to have this pedestrian pamphlet, since there is in any case none better available, and at least it covers the ground.

If, however, as I suppose, we are meant to accept the work upon a more serious basis, then we must give it a closer consideration. In the circumstances a vigorous protest becomes a duty and an act of faith.

The first thing to complain of is that the critical plan lies all along one even line of 'appreciation', which, indiscriminately applied, is a false plan. It is halting and petty. One looks in criticism for an illumination and a personality, a discrimination and selection of the matter, in short for the fully developed taste and judgement of a man who is not merely a teacher, but also an individual. Criticism to which the critic contributes nothing is as pointless as a lyric composed to order . . . as one of those eighteenth-century epitaphs it was possible to buy ready-made. In Mr. Green's case criticism amounts to little

more than a nicely proportioned balance of praise or blame, all related to a bourgeois and philistine orthodoxy. This orthodoxy is never questioned. It comes out in all the expected places. He is constrained to mention the affair Malley, for instance (in the revised "Poets of Today" section): but his tone is of shocked respectability. The Angry Penguins, he mentions, have "lately been blown up by a bomb". This is said complacently, though the Penguins, like Osiris, seem to be at least temporarily patched up again. He adds that "their expression is perverse and sometimes almost unintelligible". It is the "sometimes almost" I would draw attention to, especially the "almost". And if felicity of expression be a desideratum in a critic and not a sine qua non, nevertheless what can be made of this?—

> But Slessor's images are particularly individual and arresting, and there is always a *touch of thought* about them. [My italics.]

The same page offers the amazing suggestion—

> It seems impossible for a fresh and vigorous young country like this to produce poets who are really disillusioned; still, there is a genuine streak of cynicism in Slessor . . .

Slessor's cynicism is not disillusion; but what of the frustrated glooms of Brennan and the arid Nietzschean futilities of Baylebridge? What but disillusion has been the mark of all the greatest utterance in Australian poetry in the past? I believe it will appear to any sincerely careful observer that disillusion is the one true and fervid note of poetry in this country in the past, wherever that poetry has reached any magnitude of utterance. It colours the novel, too, in Clarke's gloomy and introspective *His Natural Life* and the remarkable novels of William Hay, which except for the accident of their prose form all seem to me to belong to the poetic rather than the narrative scheme of things. Incidentally I do not know what to make of the "lack of disillusion" which Mr. Green attributes to R. D. FitzGerald as a writer.

In matters of this kind Mr. Green shows no remarkable penetration. He accepts poetry largely at the market value. Consider this for example:

> I am going to end with a poem about which I must confess, first that I do not understand it, and second, that I do not think the less of it for that. This poem is called "The Retreat from Heaven". It is not that it is written in the ultra-modern manner, so that you cannot tell what the deuce it is all about; on the contrary, it is expressed quite simply, so that its subject is clear enough. But exactly what the poem is driving at, I do not know. Once, it is said, when a lady asked Mozart (I think it was) the meaning of a certain piece of music that he had just played, he replied, "This is the meaning, madam", and played the piece over again. Well, my point is this: whatever it is driving at, the poem makes a definite and strong impression. Is not that enough? Does it matter if we cannot transcribe its meaning exactly into prose? However, you will be able to make up your own mind about it. To me it is McKellar's best . . .

Then follows the text of the poem, which though fine and mystical, and perhaps not literally reducible to prose (why even dream of it?) is by no means the piece of mental jetsam the author's fluffy rigmarole would suggest. Cannot Mr. Green realize how intolerable, and incidentally how out-of-date, is this yellow-book apology for insensibility? It is the coarseness of the grain in this sort of criticism which makes it so revolting: the same coarseness which, earlier in the same "sketch", couples the scholarly lyrics of J. A. R. McKellar with

the negligible squibs of Barcroft Boake . , . "Where the dead men lie", indeed. "To my mind", he exclaims sententiously,

> To my mind both the performance and the possibilities of this poet were greater than Boake's; so that if we are academic enough to want to speak of an Australian Chatterton, we should refer to J. A. R. McKellar.

I fancy most of us are not so academic, certainly not to the point of awarding the honours—totally inappropriate in either case—between McKellar and Boake . . . the latter of whom,

> . . . could hardly have been called a well educated man, and his skill in verse-making was not very great . . .

The worst of Mr. Green's criticism is in his comparison of Shaw Neilson with Hugh McCrae. McCrae, he says in a striking figure, is a sunflower in the sun; Neilson is "a violet growing in the shade of a stone". (No moss, I suppose, because of the restless roving and rolling in Neilson's world.)

> . . . But whereas most writers either group themselves naturally with others or at least possess certain qualities that others possess, this cannot be said of either McCrae or Neilson. It is not that they are original in matter; their individuality consists entirely in their (quite different) personalities and methods of approach. But they have, also, another point in common. *Neither of them is a thinker*; the intellectual content of their poetry is small, though there is more in Neilson's than in McCrae's. Neilson, though by no means an intellectual, *has a strong kinship with the intellectual poets in that he is something of a mystic.*

What is revealed here but a complete anæsthesis? I find it impossible to conjecture what Mr. Green means by thought or intellect or by mysticism. The impression is simply that he has never come to a true understanding of Neilson's exquisitely sensitive and fragile (and unequal and unreliable) imagination; and that he takes McCrae only at the most obvious face value. He does not respond at all to what is essential to the genius of either poet: Neilson's utter rejection of intellect, and McCrae's intellectual cynicism. After this it is not too breathtaking to read that these two have yet another point in common: "Both Neilson and McCrae are worshippers of beauty . . ."

All this is very distasteful. Let me say something at least on the other side. Mr. Green manages very well in the short scope to convey an idea of the subject and argument of FitzGerald's *Essay on Memory,* a difficult work . . . an unnecessarily obscure work, I am inclined to think, and perhaps neither so profound nor so original as it is taken to be, but nevertheless one of the greater essays in Australian poetry. He treats well and sympathetically Brennan's *Wanderer* cycle and (wisely in the circumstances) omits the part of Brennan which is less discussible. He puts his emphasis upon a good aspect of the work of Furnley Maurice. And upon the ballad verses of Lawson, Paterson, Ogilvie and Brady he speaks (though without fastidium) with a warmth of understanding which is both congenial and convincing. Curiously he makes no reference to Paterson's Old Bush Songs, though they are clearly fundamental to the entire tradition of the Australian ballad. And for a final impression it may be said that the policy of illustrating the talks with whole poems and longer fragments has in general a pleasing effect, and the material presence of the poetry goes a long way towards compensating for the lack of distinction in the commentary.

BRIAN ELLIOTT.

The following has been received from Mr. Green:

Dear Howarth: Thanks for the opportunity of comment, but it seems hardly worth while. I should imagine that to any unbiassed reader Mr. Elliott's attack would tell against himself rather than me; especially if that reader had happened to follow the tortuous evolution of Mr. Elliott's attitude over the "Ern Malley" hoax. Still, just one example of Mr. Elliott's critical honesty and one of his critical ability. He accuses me of coupling "the scholarly lyrics of J. A. R. McKellar with the negligible squibs of Barcroft Boake". It is true that I compared certain incidents in the lives of the two poets; but as poets I did not compare them, I contrasted them. And the whole purpose of the article, as even Mr. Elliott must have realised, was to recall the far finer work of McKellar, which is generally overlooked. And in the second place the critic who considers "Where the Dead Men Lie" a negligible squib would be better employed in fitting lids on tins in a jam factory.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
H. M. Green.

STRAYED SATYRLINGS

Forests of Pan: A Selection of Poems not Hitherto Reprinted from Hugh McCrae's "Satyrs and Sunlight", 1928. Made by R. G. Howarth. (Folios of Australian Poetry, Meanjin Press, Brisbane, 1944. 4s. 6d.)

Here are the best of the rest. Hugh McCrae's *Poems* of 1939 laid emphasis on the work succeeding his original *Satyrs and Sunlight.* Perhaps the title was at fault: it gave the impression of finality; as if it were the author's final presentation of what he had written, a "Collected Works" comprising all he cared to preserve. Whether or not that was the cause, immediately there was the outcry: why was this or that omitted? Exasperation at the dropping of old favourites then turned resentful, often as not, and bit the newer poems or

sighed and said among them a',
Ye are na Mary Morison.

The purpose of that volume appeared to be to present the later Hugh McCrae, but in focus against the background of a selection of his earlier work. To my mind it succeeded: it demonstrated what I still believe to be the superiority of the middle and later periods, with their artistry, light, colour, imagination and fantasy (unrivalled in this country) over the earlier more experimental and more artificial pre-occupation with classical mythology and mediævalism. But that title, *Poems,* defeated the object. And, of course, the volume disappointed those readers who will never let a writer get past an early success, or the manner of an early success. For there can be no question of it, classical mythology in McCrae's hands ceased to be either classical or mythology. His nymphs and satyrs would probably have surprised Theocritus (I say this in all ignorance of Theocritus but with some knowledge of Hugh McCrae), but they came to life. Or, rather, they came to life within the limits of their artificial anatomies: the effect was ventriloquial: the vitality was McCrae's. It was modern poetry, modern because alive and of today's breath and action, not modern because dead with the latest fashionable putrefaction. No wonder admirers of the early poems cling to them. Nevertheless

they were surpassed by later poems which had the same vitality; were made by the same tools, to some extent even from the same material, but had more of the common earth mixed with it: more reality. All the poems are alive; but in the earlier ones it seems a superimposed hypnotically-induced life; only later does it become clearly a life of the elements, a life of the blood.

It is true that with the growth of McCrae's artistry here was some falling away of exuberance; but in the middle period especially there was a more than compensating advance in sureness and strength. Later still, poems were to be written in yet another vein, a lighter, simpler vein; and, in all, McCrae is not one poet but a number. The many sides he has to show were not all shown at once, but at different stages of development.

Granting all that there still remained the hard fact of those disappointing omissions; so R. G. Howarth has set about correcting them.

McCrae has never, I think, been a "neglected" poet. Is any good poet ever really seriously neglected? McCrae has always had those readers he wanted. The shoe has been on the other foot; the poems are not, and never have been, available to the full circle of appreciative readers. Enthusiastic admirers could not usually buy expensive limited editions; earlier volumes are out of print; and *Poems* is, as complained of, incomplete. For the rest, *Voice of the Forest* is in the press—a happy piece of news given out by Howarth in his foreword—and many have yet to be written. But if you possess *Poems* and now purchase *Forests of Pan*, you can be satisfied that you have substantially everything to date; for R. G. Howarth has done his job well. Here and there, if you know McCrae's work well, you will miss something still; I miss the fourth part of "Joan of Arc", for instance;* but there are now no violently wide gaps; what gaps there are you can jump with your hands in your pockets. Look for the pieces you really felt robbed of before and you'll find them. Do you remember:

> But he who drinks of Helicon
> Has life eternal surely won.
> He is the scabbard to that sword,
> Which, left alone, without its ward,
> Would rust its inches meanly down,
> While fatted fools enjoy the crown
> It once had fought for in the steam
> Of heavy battles. . . . Ah, the gleam
> Is fresh as ever, underneath
> The scrolling bay-leaves of its sheath,
> And men shall tremble at its name
> *Excalibur*. . . .

and this:

> To love a girl, no harm therein—
> Wine is a villain, make no doubt,
> Who bolts and bars young Cupid out.
> Love's of a lustre will but shine
> Brightlier when it shuts out wine.
> Count girls and books and flowers your friends. . . .
> Money and wine the least of ends.

and "Heigh an' Scrape" and "The Gallant Captain Plate"—Remember? They are all here.

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* "The Meadow of Chateau-des-Iles", on pages 165-6 of *Satyrs and Sunlight*.

Incidentally the Meanjin Press is to be congratulated on these *Folios of Australian Poetry.* Small volumes like this, or smaller ones (sixpenny pamphlets like the "Augustan" series that was) provide the real answer to the anthologist's self-justification that poets need to be "represented" and made known by selections. Small separate volumes that can represent a poet without enforcing him into association with others not necessarily compatible, and fully enough to show various phases without over-emphasis on any single aspect, provide the ideal. They eliminate the anthologist's private taste to the greatest possible extent, and are not subject to the necessity of making a book which must hang together as a whole not as just a collection of dissociated parts; moreover they do not "fix" certain poems on public consciousness as on a photographic plate, as anthologies tend to do . . . But there goes King Charles' head again.

Buy *Forests of Pan,* if you have two books you can slip it between on a bookshelf . . . and then leave it lying around on tables and chairs, handy to pick up. These aren't just good poems; they are old favourites you will want to read over and over again.

ROBERT D. FITZGERALD.

Correction, page 23, and in *Satyrs and Sunlight,* 1928, "Heigh an' Scrape", line 5: for "drunken" read "drucken".—R.G.H.

WHY NOT FINALITY ON FURPHY?

Joseph Furphy. The Legend of a Man and his Book. By Miles Franklin, in association with Kate Baker. (Angus and Robertson Ltd., Sydney, 1944. 10s. 6d.)

In a prefatory note to her eagerly-awaited book, Miles Franklin states that "the time is not yet ripe for a definitive biography of Joseph Furphy". I could wish she had not been so modest and hesitant. The material that has been brought together for this study is both important and adequate; it could very well have been used for a straightforward account of Furphy; and Miles Franklin and Kate Baker are well qualified to write that account. As it is, I must confess that the book disappoints me; it is neither one thing nor the other. On the one hand, there are gaps in the narrative, and the arrangement is disconcerting; on the other, some irrelevant discussion has been added after the narrative proper.

The second fault seems to me the greater. Miles Franklin the critic is not the equal of Miles Franklin the novelist and biographer, and her attempts to assess Furphy's importance in literature by comparing him with Proust, Henry James, Aldous Huxley and James Joyce seem to me to fail all along the line. Moreover, they can do Furphy's reputation no possible good—and might do it some harm. We read, for example, that: "*Such is Life* is instinct with dauntless faith: *Point Counterpoint* is depressing in its cynicism. Huxley seemingly regards his collection with more disillusion than disapproval." Even if this is true, it tells us nothing whatever about the merits of Huxley and Furphy *as novelists*; it merely expresses a preference (critically irrelevant) for a certain type of mind. Elsewhere, the habit of pushing a comparison as far as it will go leads to triviality and absurdity. It is not altogether unfair, I think, to quote: "Joseph Furphy chose a few months in the years 1883-4 for the time

of his epic, which was printed in 1903, twenty years later: James Joyce took a day in 1904 for his, which did not reach publication in English-speaking countries till 1934—thirty years after the day drawn upon."

It is bad tactics to try to extol one writer at the expense of others, particularly when there is nothing *in what is written* to show that the special merits of those others are even recognized. I wonder just what kind of wrong impression of both Furphy and Miles Franklin would be obtained from this sort of thing by a critic overseas?

I should also like to draw attention to one very regrettable misprint. It is on page 142, where Miss Franklin quotes Tom Collins's important statement on the opening page of *Such is Life* as "Whilst a peculiar defect . . . shuts me out from the flowery pathway of the romancer, a co-ordinate requital endows me, I trust, with the more sterling, if less ornamental qualities of the character . . .". *Character* should, of course, be *chronicler*. Incidentally, Miss Franklin's comment on this passage is that. "it can be taken that Furphy is describing himself as accurately as he appraised his book in his own review of it". Perhaps it is true; I doubt it; but the main point to be made is that here *Tom Collins* is summing *himself* up quite *wrongly*. I suspect that Miles Franklin too often takes Furphy literally.

When all these criticisms have been advanced, the fact, of course, remains that Miles Franklin and Kate Baker have added considerably to our knowledge of Furphy and his novels: their book is a "must" for anybody interested at all in one of our greatest Australian writers. The biographical details were worth recording; and the quotations from the letters, particularly those relating to the composition of *Such is Life,* are woven skilfully into the narrative and are often most illuminating. A final word of praise might well be given to the skill with which Miles Franklin has often let Furphy and A. G. Stephens and others speak for themselves, while she acted as the perfect editor, intervening only to arrange the various letters in the best possible order.

H. J. Oliver.

WHITHER PENGUINS?

Angry Penguins. Edited by Max Harris and John Reed. December, 1944. (Reed and Harris, Melbourne. 4s. 6d.)

Ern Malley and the "Angry Penguins": Being a Review of the Greatest Hoax in Australia's Literary History, and the Subsequent "Indecency Trial". (W. Hornadge, Lismore, 1944. 9d.)

Angry Penguins, December, 1944, is an interesting publication. It covers a wide range from original literature to sociology, art criticism and music. But, in spite of this range and the fine setting-out of the magazine, there is too much inferior work which destroys the favourable first impression. I feel, too, that the wide range of subject-matter is not planned with any definite policy in mind. The only section that promises continuity is the most interesting in the number; "Letters to a Young Poet (from) Rainer Maria Rilke". These are deserving of close study by everyone concerned with poets or poetry.

The sociological section, too, is worth while. Tom Harrisson's article, "Socio-Starvation: Australia", forms a good criticism of our weakness in that

field; Harrisson neither dismisses with contempt our puny efforts nor does he make excuses. As an ex-serviceman I am thoroughly in agreement with John Sutherland's open letter to Dr. Coombes on the subject of Rehabilitational Training. I have met many of Mr. Sutherland's war-dazed examples and I think that his protest is timely though certain to go unheeded.

On the other hand, some of the articles are so poor that it is difficult to understand why they were included. Dr. Reg. Ellery's essay, "Poetry and Purgation", contains no poetry; but Dr. Ellery seems to have as much interest in the purely physical functions of the human race as he has in the mental functions. Dr. Ellery ought to devote his spare time to the treatment of some of the younger contributors instead of wasting it on an analysis of the dead or those who never existed.

I feel that far too much space is devoted to "Ern Malley", who bids fair to become with Mr. Harris a kind of King Charles's Head. Let us hope that in future issues of *Angry Penguins* thirty per cent of the pages will not be devoted to him. The elaborate set-up of the magazine indicates that the editors have financial means to give Australia a really good cultural magazine.

"Delirium", by Alan Marshall, is an interesting and technically well-done story, though somewhat slight. Greville Texidor's "At Home and Alone" is hardly good enough, while the stories by Collinson and Reid are modernised versions of the sort of thing we all wrote for our school magazines. It is not fair to these two lads to offer their stories in "open competition". Reid, however, in two of his poems shows a fine sense of rhythm which gives us hope that he will write poetry when he becomes more mature emotionally.

With the translations of Lorca, a comparison must be sought if you don't know Spanish. This can be found in Spender and Gill's "Song of the Rider". Miss Texidor's versions are inferior poetically.

The first poem of John Tallis (inspired by Rilke) seems the better of the two offered. Owen Campbell Mortimer's translation, "Fighting Boy", deserves mention, and "Invasion" by H. Witheford is of fair average quality. "Dispossession", the best of eleven poems by Max Harris, is nearly good. The others range from bad to very bad, though you are arrested occasionally by lines such as:

> . . . your brain becomes the lilted thought
> that curved in mystic flight . . .

These lines, however, are rare.

Mr. Harris would be well-advised to exercise, in the interests of his own artistic reputation, a more vigorous editing of his own work. When he is able to give us an overseas section, he is obviously no longer in the position of the struggling young editor who has to write most of his magazine himself.

This rather extensive overseas section is most disappointing. Contributions are well below the standard of poems written by some of these poets for English and American magazines. Unlike Australian primary produce the export of poetry from England and America is not under Government supervision. Caveat emptor! Nicholas Moore's contributions are so far below his usual level that I suspect he has used *Angry Penguins* as a dumping-ground for stuff that he could not "palm off" elsewhere. Ian Brevet's "Ambush" is the only poem in this section which is of the average quality that we expect of local poets. But his sonnet is incomprehensible though the imagery is as startling as the form is novel.

Beneath whose silken eyelids
pallored nuns
Are eyes: coal burs like
gossamer wings a flutter-
flow
In music; adagio wounds
are fluid nouns;
Prayer fruit breathing song on
tender boughs . . .

Deep eye-frustrated vowels
bleed alarm
Of sickened worlds
caressed in gentleness,
a balm
Of Christ is snowing peace
gauzing the brain;
Over aware of love will wake
in pain

Of things remembered, things . . .
we would too soon
forget,
Returning gnaws the heart . . .

Too soon forget? No! that is impossible.

It is unfair to blame the poet altogether. No doubt he thinks that this poem has merit. All writers tend to read into their own work those emotions which they feel strongly yet so rarely express.

We expect the editor to exercise an objective judgement on these things and our censure must be directed at him. I feel that Mr. Harris has been carried away by the thrill of having contributions from the great overseas and has allowed his excitement to paralyse his judgement.

Considerable interest has been aroused in *Angry Penguins,* which is now at a cross-roads. It can either continue full of literary pretentions or settle down to hold its present popularity by supporting the best literature written in or out of the country. I commend the latter course.

Of *Ern Malley and the "Angry Penguins"* the author writes in his foreword: "The booklet is by no means intended as a complete review of the hoax . . . It should, however, do much to offset the many one-sided and biased accounts of the hoax that have appeared in the 'popular press'." This publication makes it quite clear that Brian Elliott, instead of being taken in by the hoax, was the first to expose it.

Mention is made of *The Darkening Ecliptic* as "a reprint of the text and introduction of the Ern Malley matter from Autumn 'Angry Penguins'. Ern Malley", comments Mr. Hornadge, "apparently rose from his grave to amend the text, as at least one line differed from the original".

E. S. Lowery.

FOUR IN HAND

Harvest. By William Hart-Smith.
Pacific Moon. By Peter Miles.
Progress to Denial. By Colin Thiele.
Time-Shadows. By Ian Tilbrook.
(Jindyworobak Publications, Adelaide. 1945.)

Harvest, by William Hart-Smith, is a definite advance on his previous volume, *Columbus Goes West.* The touches of intense personal feeling manifested occasionally in that volume are more evident in some of the poems of *Harvest.* Too much of *Columbus Goes West* was written because the author felt that he ought to write objectively on a chosen subject. *Harvest,* however, is more spontaneous and seems to be the result of an inner urge compelling him to set down his ideas without relating them to any poetic blueprint.

Hart-Smith strikes no heroic note, but, like Spender, in his *Still Centre,* realises that the events happening in the world today are too big and too close to us to be covered by anyone responsible for only a minute part of these events. He deals with the small but important things that would be passed unnoticed by a less sensitive writer. The poem "A Tank Man Remembers Horses" is a good example:

> Quite suddenly I noticed horses
> cropping the grass, standing head down,
> one foot forward. They had always been there,
> but quite suddenly I noticed them.

This poem is more than an accurate picture of horses cropping grass in the rain, or a nostalgic longing of a member of an armoured brigade; it reveals an acute awareness that should be part of every poet. You have the feeling that Hart-Smith is speaking to you personally, and you can understand the emotional impetus that prompted this poem. It has the loose effortless rhythm and aptness of image that mark so much of his work. His poetry now has a stronger note of assurance and a greater mastery of language than his previous published work. He has a strong lyrical quality in much of his work, particularly in "The Surplus":

> Singing troubles me, the
> singing of a bird.
> Reason tells me that
>
> Whether or not he takes
> joy in it, all puffed up and
> a tree his high dais.
>
> Song is for mating only. She
> listens, he pours it out.
> Song is for mating in season.
>
> But the surplus, the
> overflow. More than is
> necessary comes
>
> From that bird, far
> more than is wanted I'm
> positive, positive!

In this poem there is more than a lyrical quality—there is the hint of a deeper emotion that the poet is restraining. The poem without being derivative is slightly reminiscent of Frost, but Hart-Smith achieves a greater urgency in the last two stanzas than Frost does in his lyrics.

With few exceptions, the poems are of a high standard, and quite the best that have been published here for some time. I feel that Hart-Smith, if he will allow his emotions full scope now that he has achieved technical facility, will occupy an important place in poetry.

Pacific Moon would be better called *Wind,* for in many of the poems this motif predominates. The constant succession of this tends to irritate, and you feel that you cannot do the same justice to the poems in collection as you could if each were presented separately in a periodical. No single poem, in spite of its faults, can be condemned, for the worst are to some extent saved by a really fine piece of imagery or a well-defined rhythm. It would have been much wiser to have scrapped many of the poems, carefully revised others, and delayed publication until we could have been presented with a greater number of poems like the first, "The Hill":

> Red tufted grass in the wind, in the pull of the
> Wind, and the wavering run uphill
> Like a movement of sea.
> I shall go back for that motion, lie still
> In excitable grass with the talkative tree
> Chanting spells over me.
> And the wind
> Will be flecking the river with hot
> Dapple dances of sun that are dinned
> In the eye like a clash
> Of high cymbals: I cannot
> Forget to go back, for the lash
> Of the wind is my goal and the run
> Of the wavering grass is at one
> With the lyrical movement of mind, like a sea
> Washing, impelling me.

His fine imagery, sense of rhythm, striking a personal note like Hart-Smith's, mark Peter Miles as a very promising young poet. His imagery is apt and in no way conventional. There is sincerity in his work, but a general air of hurriedness and lack of revision.

Progress to Denial, by Colin Thiele, winner of the 1944 W. J. Miles Memorial Prize, is too reminiscent of Ian Mudie's former prize-winning poem, "The Australian Dream", and suffers from all the faults of a patriotic poem written to order. The poet has not only tried to capture the spirit of Australia, but to include the whole of Australian exploits, past, present and future. In spite of a considerable mastery of blank verse, this poem contributes nothing new or exciting to Australian poetry.

Time Shadows, by Ian Tilbrook, is Jindyworobak at its worst. Although he shows no originality, this writer has a certain sincerity that might be effective if it were not masked by his determination to be Australian at all costs, with constant references to such things as "aboriginal faces", "spear-scarred earth", "lizards blinking in the sun" and "time-old scenes untouched by civilisation". The author's thought is derivative and confused. He would do much better if in future he dropped his frenzied efforts to be madly Australian,

and concentrated on his own real feelings and experiences, letting his Australian outlook and spirit shine through naturally.

HERMEA MOORE.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Sesame and Other Poems. By John Thompson. With drawings by John Andrews. (The Currawong Publishing Co., Sydney, 1944.)

Poems. By Emily Bulcock. (Author, Brisbane, 1945.)

Time-Shadows. Verse by Ian Tilbrook. (A Jindyworobak Publication, Adelaide, 1945.)

The Spirit of the West, or Ballads of Cattle Land. By Lex McLennan. Second Edition. (Dymock's Book Arcade Ltd., Sydney, 1944.)

Queensland Days. Poems by E. M. England. (Dymock's Book Arcade Ltd., 1944.)

The Old Pianist. Poems by F. John Blight. (Dymock's Book Arcade Ltd., 1945.)

We Were the Rats. By Lawson Glassop. (Angus and Robertson Ltd., 1945.)

Two Frontiers. By E. J. Brady. (Frank Johnson, Sydney, 1944.)

Australian Bush Songs and Ballads. Edited by Will Lawson. (Frank Johnson, 1944.)

The Poet's Harvest (*The Poet's Way, Stage III*). Selected by E. W. Parker, M.C. With Additional Australian Poems. (Longmans Green and Co., Melbourne, 1945.)

Prospects of Democracy. Edited by W. H. C. Eddy, with an Introductory Essay by John Anderson. (Consolidated Press Ltd., Sydney, 1945.)

The British Theatre. By W. Bridges-Adams. *English Literature.* By B. Ifor Evans. (British Life and Thought, Nos. 14 and 15. Published for the British Council by Longmans Green and Co., 1944.)

Actors by the Thousand. By John Bourne. (Published for the British Council by Longmans Green and Co., 1944.)

Mulberry Leaves: *The Story of Charles Whitehead.* By Clive Turnbull. (The Australian Heritage Books. The Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1945. 8s. 6d.)

We're Going Through: *A Radio Verse Play of the A.I.F.* By T. Inglis Moore. (Angus and Robertson Ltd., 1945. 3s. 6d.)

Briarcliff Quarterly (*Continuing the Maryland Quarterly*). Under the Direction of Norman Macleod. Volume I, Number 4, January, 1945. (Briarcliff Junior College, New York. 50 cents.)

Flicka Daze, or "Perils Without Pauline". By Hartney Arthur. (Mulga Publications, Sydney, 1945. 5s. 6d.)

Meanjin Papers: *A Quarterly of Literature.* Edited by C. B. Christesen. Number One, 1945. (Melbourne University Press. 2s. 6d.)

The Australian Language: *An Examination of the English Language and English Speech as Used in Australia, from Convict Days to the Present, with Special Reference to the Growth of Indigenous Idiom and its Use by Australian Writers.* By Sidney J. Baker. (Angus and Robertson Ltd., Sydney, 1945. 21s.)

Selected Poems. By L. Bladen. (Patersons Printing Press Ltd., Perth, 1945. 2s. 6d.)

Great Was the Fall!: *A Story of the Malayan Tragedy.* By an R.A.A.F. Officer. (Patersons Printing Press Ltd., 1945. 4s.)

NOTES

Apology.—In Number Three of last year it was suggested that "Damocles", in *Arna,* 1942, might be Harold Stewart. We are now credibly informed that this is not so. An apology is therefore tendered to Mr. Stewart.

A Furphy Number.—The third number of the year will be devoted to Joseph Furphy. It will contain hitherto unpublished work of his kindly contributed by Miss Kate Baker, O.B.E., his lifelong friend and literary executrix, together with comment on his personality and major works, and will appear in September, the month of his birth.

The Chris. Brennan Memorial Fund.—Subscriptions to the Fund opened by the Fellowship of Australian Writers, Sydney, now exceed £50. Steps have accordingly been taken to erect a suitable memorial over the poet's grave in the Northern Suburbs Cemetery.

"Coast to Coast", 1945.—Contributions are now invited for the fifth (1945) issue of "Coast to Coast", the yearly anthology of Australian short stories. Writers should submit not more than two or three recently written stories; work already published in newspapers and magazines may be submitted; and stories not used will be returned. A gesture payment of two guineas will be made for each story accepted.

Contributions should be addressed to the Editor, Coast to Coast, c.o. Angus and Robertson Ltd., Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

Poem Competition.—A prize of £10 10s. is offered by the Queensland Authors' and Artists' Association for the winning entry in a Lyric Poem Competition, closing September 30. The competition is in memory of James Picot, Queensland poet, who enlisted early in 1941, went abroad with the 8th Division, and died in a Japanese P.O.W. camp in March, 1944. There is no stipulation as to length or subject, and there is no entry fee. Further particulars, if desired, may be obtained by sending a stamped addressed envelope to the Hon. Sec. of the competition, R. S. Byrnes, B.A., "Clairvaux", Power Street, Norman Park, S.E.1, Brisbane.

"Australian Poetry, 1945."—Contributions are now being invited for the fifth issue of our yearly anthology of Australian poetry, and should be in our hands not later than August 31.

The anthology will be edited this year by Mr. Kenneth Slessor, and contributions should be addressed to the Editor, *Australian Poetry, 1945,* care of ourselves.—Angus & Robertson Ltd.